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THE
QUEEN'S SHILLING.

A SOLDIER'S STORY.

BY
CAPTAIN ARTHUR GRIFFITHS,

Author of "Peccavi; or, Geoffrey Singleton's Mistake."

VOL. II.

LONDON :
HENRY S. KING & Co., 65, CORNHILL.

1872.

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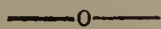
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The Queen's Shilling.



CHAPTER I.

SOME OLD FRIENDS MEET.

“For since these arms of mine had seven years pith,
Till now some nine moons wasted, they have used
Their dearest action in the tented field ;
And little of this great world can I speak,
More than pertains to feats of broil and battle.”

Othello.

To those who have tried the game in real earnest, “playing at soldiers” must be the dreariest of pastimes. It needs so much of what children call “make believe” to throw any spirit into the sport. No one “pretends” properly, unless it be the generals who pretend to know what they don’t, or the lookers-on, who say they love a “sham fight,” although really it bores them to death. Then the rivers called impassable are too unmistakably mere gutters, the inaccessible mountains clearly gentle slopes,

the cavalry charges are hollow shams, the guns contain nothing but blank cartridge, and the enemy is irrepressible, turning up like a clown to cry "here we are again," ready to march past or renew the fight, although utterly defeated and massacred to a man. On these bloodless fields, moreover, the more ghastly properties of warfare are wanting. There are no ambulances, no suffering humanity, no tortured horses, no rags, no rapine, no dirt. Dirt, mud-stains on boot and belt, tattered uniforms, lace tarnished, and finery faded,—these are the marks of a month's campaign in earnest; the glitter and tinsel shine only on home shores and peaceful parades, such as Claycliffe Camp knew twice a week or oftener, as the spirit moved its lord and master—the general in chief command.

Claycliffe is not a hundred miles from London—within easy reach of bigwigs and royalties, foreign or domestic, who visit it in state. To them it is an agreeable playground; to others, sentenced to stay there, it is a species of torture chamber, where rack and thumb-screw await the heresy of incompetence. Officers, aged or ignorant, come hither to suffer the question;

and regiments fresh from colonial service and putative rustiness are brought hither also to have their smartness and efficiency put to the test.

It was at Claycliffe that the 145th regiment found itself several years after the events recorded in the preceding chapters; not the old 145th, but a new battalion, raised during the Indian mutiny, of which a certain George Gaynor is colonel, and our friend Alured Frere adjutant. Our hero had been sent to the new levy as a treasure, and such his colonel found him. Active, industrious, and painstaking, merits invaluable to Gaynor, who toiled not, neither did he spin. Alured had his reward—a few curt words of approval in the reports of inspecting generals, while the colonel took all the credit.

Absorbed in close attention to his duties, Frere had had leisure to learn little beyond soldiering in the years that had passed. Kept constantly on foreign service, with but rare intervals of leave, he had vegetated in garrison towns, tied down to routine, mastering the geography of barrack buildings, the substance of vague local orders, and the details of a volu-

minous correspondence. His world had been the narrow world of his regiment; mess-room jokes his joys; his sorrows, the officer's "duty roster," and the awkward squads of recalcitrant recruits. His mind at Malta had not travelled beyond Ricasoli, and the Auberge de Castille; at Gibraltar it was bounded by the Bayside Guard and Europa advance. Such society as had come within his reach in these days of exile he had avoided. The wiles of "blue noses," even in far-famed Halifax could not drag him from Fort Needham to walk "on Granville," or try the ice on Dartmouth Lakes. Others might waste their time at carnival balls, studying foreign languages with female professors, Alured's energies were concentrated upon his work. His duty lay close to his hand in the barrack square, and here in a certain rough way he was learning to be self-reliant, masterful, and ready in emergencies. Nay more, the lesson developed in him such qualities as tact, forbearance, and knowledge of men. The adjutant of a regiment is a great personage. In his own little world he is supreme. He wields much power, and men come or go pretty promptly as

he orders. It is easy for him to make enemies, difficult to keep friends. His comrades are jealous and his subordinates fear him. To gain the good will of the former he may sacrifice independence and loyalty to his chief, while the subservience of the latter may foster self-sufficiency. And yet Alured Frere had managed to steer straight ahead, doing what was right, and keeping the good will of all.

Rajah Bihr Bikrumajeet having come to England on a visit of ceremony, he was taken to Claycliffe in a royal carriage, and shown a review of British troops. There was a magnificent display. The neighbouring magnates were never tired of driving over to witness the physical torments of their fellow-creatures, and this time the rajah was an additional attraction. After some hours of unintelligible counter-marching, amid smoke and shouts, the performance ended in the stereotyped "march past," dear to the "gallery," whence new bonnets wagged approval as Charlie galloped by with his guns, or Captain Plunger did the pursuing practice, or poor Grabby Brownsmith trudged by, having the air of a conqueror.

There were not wanting friends for the 145th. In one waggonette sat a beautiful woman, not quite youthful now, a girl pretty and fashionable, and a child of six or seven. The young lady seemed to have no special interest in the troops as they went by. She was playing with the fringe of her parasol, as if bored, when the elder woman cried—

“Look, Millicent! There is our old friend, Mr. Frere.”

“Mr. Frere?” was the rather languid question asked in reply.

“Yes; *you* remember. At Moynehan, when you were about *so* high, he was always with us.”

“I have some faint recollection. What is he like?”

“There. Judge for yourself. He is riding that chestnut.”

Alured was sitting on his horse as straight as he could, and looking very fine. The dust could not spoil his neat figure or his easy seat on horseback. It only made his moustachios a lighter brown, and powdered his eyebrows.

“I’ll ask him to come over and see us—would you like it?”

"I? oh, very much." But she spoke as if she did not care one pin.

"I don't think you recollect him properly, Millicent. He used to be such a nice boy."

"I never cared much for boys, aunt. Indeed, I dislike them."

"But he is not a boy now."

The end of it was that Alured found one morning among his letters on the orderly room table, a coroneted, monogramed envelope, containing an invitation from Lady Moynehan. A pretty little note, saying :—

"DEAR MR. FRERE,—We were so glad yesterday to see you again, and to find that you are still in the land of the living. You must come and see us. Please write and name your own day, or will you come next Saturday, and stay till Monday? You can get here either by train or road. Hoping that we shall see you soon, and with kind regards from Millicent,

Believe me,

Yours most truly,

M. MOYNEHAN."

The letter was dated the evening of the rajah's review, from King's Lilies, Cheswell, Bankshire.

In all the time that had passed, Alured had never forgotten the pleasant days at Moynehan. The soft encouraging smile of the great dame who had condescended to be his friend was still fresh in his memory; he still saw the bright face of the little maiden with whom he had laughed and played. Often had he hoped that they might meet again; but in the short visits he had paid to England, Scaggleton had taken all his time. Major Frere seemed to live his life again in his son, and could hardly spare Alured from his side, cross-questioning always, arguing, or comparing notes. Mother and sisters were not less eager to fête and make much of him. It was joy for the one simply to gaze on the son still spared to her; for the others, all fun and amusement dated from Alured's arrival at home. So Frere had never roamed far, and failing a direct invitation to Moynehan, had no opportunity of renewing his acquaintance with the friends of his early depot life. The works of Debrett and Burke were not much in his line, or he might have

read therein that Edmund, Earl of Moynehan was dead, and that Algernon, fourteenth earl reigned in his stead. Had he sought out this information, he might have learned also that the present earl was his late lordship's posthumous son, and not Herbert Pierpoint, who was described in the early portion of this history as "waiting for the off chance."

Colonel Gaynor being always "nasty" about leave, Alured was long before he could screw up his courage to ask if he could go to King's Lilies. Frere was so much to be depended upon, that his chief rarely allowed him to be absent. Somebody must be upon the spot always; and the colonel himself could not. He had so many calls, you see, elsewhere.

"I do not like my adjutant to ask for leave," he said sharply to Alured. With Colonel Gaynor it was always "my" adjutant, "my" regiment, "my" officers; as if he had them in fee simple, or had bought them all out-and-out, from the senior major to the youngest drummer. "Where, pray, are you going?"

It was more than rude, and Alured would not enlighten him.

“ I am going to stay at a country house not far off.”

“ A country house! Lord save us! you're cutting it pretty fat, young fellow. Some tallow-chandler I suppose, who has sunk the shop, and set up a villa with a tower, and a lawn, and three o'clock dinners.”

Frere's frank face grew rather clouded. At that moment he would have been glad of any excuse for a quarrel with his chief; but he knew he must get the worst of it. They were not on equal terms. A fight between them, would have been as fair as a struggle between a costermonger's donkey and a brewer's horse. But Gaynor knew the value of a good subordinate; and he was man enough to see that he was going too far.

“ Well—you can go, Mr. Frere. But it's horribly inconvenient. From Saturday till Monday—Monday morning, mind, early on Monday. Who is to do your work? Grandison? I do hope he'll keep things straight.

“ And you must see to those returns before you go,” the colonel went on. “ And be good enough to see to the alteration of the pouches

throughout the regiment. I will not have my men appearing on parade with their pouches in the small of their backs. The book says three inches below—below—”

“No sir, four,—below the elbow.”

“Four, is it?” said Gaynor, looking very black. It was the only bit of revenge Alured ever got, to put the colonel right, and he never missed his opportunity. “Four? It’s too much. I prefer three inches,” said the colonel, prepared to set orders at defiance sooner than confess himself wrong.

“That will do, Mr. Frere. You can go. If I want you, I’ll send for you. Leave your address with the clerk.”

Alured was only too glad to escape at any price. The colonel and he were antipathetic; and it was strange that they had not fallen out long before this. Gaynor was a middle aged beau. He did not like to be thought old, and yet he made no attempt to persuade people that he was still young. Proud of his youthful figure and active habits, he rode well to hounds still, and could dance, and flirt, with anybody who gave him the chance. All his life Gaynor

had been making to himself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. He seemed to know every one worth knowing, and everybody returned the compliment. A man in the best society is taken very much at his own price I expect, and the higher you make it the more bids you get. Gaynor had never held himself too cheap. His price, if you had bought him at his own valuation, would have been very dear indeed. But people seemed to pay it. And he was a man who never lost a chance. Not in the least shy or retiring, his hardihood, rising almost to impudence, was the secret of his success. Give him but an inch and he soon got himself an ell. Let him enter any house, and within a week or two he was on intimate terms with the whole family. But Gaynor was really useful in a country house : an excellent *raconteur* ; not a bad artist, and with tact enough to make himself agreeable to dowagers and aged maids, whom others despised. You saw him everywhere. At race meetings, routs, levies, and scientific gatherings. During the season he was inevitable in the Park. Even when his newly raised regiment had disap-

peared into the outer darkness of foreign service, Gaynor was continually turning up in England. You wondered, knowing he was not rich, how he could afford to be running backwards and forwards from the Mediterranean, and out again, every few months, and across the Atlantic twice a year. But Gaynor's way* of living was a mystery. One winter he was well mounted at Melton; next year he took his share of a good shooting; another he hired a yacht for a cruise to Corfu.

It seemed to be Gaynor's great aim to keep himself continually before the public. He aspired, too, to be a great soldier; now and again he wrote a pamphlet, or a letter in the daily papers, under a transparent *nom de plume*, discussing the military questions of the hour,—whether, for instance, the buttons should be made of pewter or brass; whether the troops should be taught to run on all fours. These *brochures* were generally some one else's work. Alured's probably, or the orderly room clerk's; for Gaynor had no conscience about picking other people's brains.

But Gaynor deserved some credit for the

way he had got on. It was chiefly by choosing his circle of acquaintance judiciously. He had a very keen nose for scenting out a swell, whether *in esse* or *in posse*, and it was wonderful how much this helped him on in after-years. Numbers of young fellows whom he had patronized in early youth, because he knew they might succeed to titles or estates, came in after all for family honours, and they generally showed that they were grateful. Gaynor gained a footing thus in more than one great house, and half the men who nodded to him in the park or took his arm down the street, would have been strangers but for those early manœuvres of his.

Alured Frere, unhappily, was no great man's son. He never could inherit much; Gaynor knew all about old Frere. So the colonel treated his adjutant with cold disdain, and snubbed him as much as he found it safe.

CHAPTER II.

KING'S LILIES.

“ *I* was a child and *she* was a child
In this kingdom by the sea ;
But we loved with a love that was more than love—
I and my Annabel Lee—
With a love that the wingèd seraphs of heaven
Coveted her and me.”

EDGAR ALLAN POE.

ON the Saturday that he was invited, Alured hired a dog-cart, and drove himself over to King's Lilies.

It was not a very large place, and had been settled upon Lady Moynahan when she married as a dower-house. Not far from the road, and with no big park surrounding it, but lying among the trees like a nest ; tall bushes of laurestina and rhododendron hid the highway, and broke the sound of wheels rattling back and forward to the chief town of Bankshire. The house might be said to have two fronts, one to which the avenue led, and in which was the hall door, and the other overlooking

the lawn, and the pleasant meadow that carried the view on to the trees above the river. Along this side were all the reception rooms, leading one into the other, and every window of them opened on to the lawn. In summer time Lady Moynehan and her company overflowed, as it were, and floated from the pretty rooms out upon the smooth soft grass, where they grouped themselves about picturesquely on garden chairs, low seated, or on rugs spread over the rich green velvet carpet. You might have thought that Millicent and her friends in their gay colours were gorgeous exotics, transplanted from far off climes, or a covey of bright-feathered tropical birds.

The dining-room at King's Lilies, where Alured found the party seated at lunch, was half a library. Books covered the walls nearly, the rest was dark oak wainscoat or pictures,—the same pretty watercolours that had adorned the boudoir at Moynehan; while in the place of honour over the fire-place was a half-length portrait of the late earl. Here and there between the quaintly variegated rugs that did duty for a carpet, peeped bits of a polished dark

oak floor ; outside in the sun, and close by the open windows, a great white Persian cat sleeked its long fur, or eyed greedily Millicent's pet canaries overhead and a pair of turtle-doves in a wicker cage just beyond its reach.

"You see we did not wait for you," said Lady Moynehan, extending her hand. "Sit down. You must be ravenous. Never mind shaking hands with Millicent, that will keep. What will you have? A cutlet? They're almost cold, I'm afraid."

She had gone on talking, with kindly tact, just to cover his entrance ; not that Alured was shy now, as of old, but he found himself the only male present, and there were other people at lunch besides Lady Moynehan and her niece. These were the Duchess of Greyfriars and her two daughters, neighbours who had a house close by, to which they came on Saturdays, and sometimes during the summer months. Stay, Alured was not the only male : there was little Lord Moynehan having his dinner at this their lunch time ; but as the earl was barely six, and just then engrossed in the stirring of his weak wine and water

with a dirty fork, he did not afford the new comer much countenance and protection.

Our hero was a little distressed, not ill at ease exactly, for he was too well-bred naturally to look or act otherwise than as a gentleman. But he felt small, "sat upon," almost nervous, under the duchess's eye-glass; although she, honest woman, was only thinking what an extremely handsome young fellow Alured was, and had seemingly quite forgotten that she was staring at him. But it put him out of countenance. He was standing on his merits, he thought, before a critical audience of women,—not rapturously beautiful all of them, for the Duchess of Greyfriars was decidedly old, and the Lady Agatha certainly plain, but charming persons, fastidious no doubt, and hard to please. Especially, however, were the other two young ladies grateful to the eye. There was such an air about them; their dresses plain but exquisite in taste; cool colours, pale maize or tender grey; their little adornments, their bits of choice jewellery, their fluttering ribbons, and their costly lace added grace to the sight. The picture was richly painted, and full of

finish. In keeping were the plate and cut glass, the snow white linen, and the delicate odour of the flowers on the table.

But these ladies were all women of the world, not behind the hostess in tact. The girls prattled away with their small talk just from where they had left off when Alured entered.

"Will Mr. Tredcroft come down?" asked Millicent.

"He certainly will, if he can get away from the House."

"Oh! the House!" cried Lady Agatha with a laugh. She was not jealous of her sister's *fiancé*, but it amused her to attack him, just to draw Adeline out. "There's no House on Saturday night. Besides, he never does much at the House."

"He always votes the right way at any rate," cried Lady Adeline, tossing her head.

"He's always full of his committees, and his constituents, and the speeches he has prepared and never utters."

"Does he speak much?" asked Lady Moynehan.

"He never gets on his legs—why do you laugh, Millicent? that's the proper expression—since he took the oaths."

"I suppose they swear a great deal in the House of Commons," Millicent said.

"You know what she means," Adeline answered rather crossly.

"But is he coming by the afternoon train?" said Lady Moynehan. "I'll send to the station to fetch him."

"Pray, Lady Moynehan, don't think of it. He is so uncertain," cried Lady Adeline. "And then I know he prefers walking. It's so good for him, too."

Millicent laughed. "I hope he always does what's good for him," she said.

"Oh, Lady Moynehan," broke in the duchess, "we met such an interesting man at the Keysacks. They say it's quite difficult to get him. He's overwhelmed with invitations from everybody. Windsor, Sandringham, Floors, everywhere. He's been to Japan, and Honolulu, and Zulu, and Madagascar——"

"A regular Captain Cook."

"And has been a guest of nearly every

crowned head in Europe; and he's a bachelor, and pleasant, and nice looking."

"Of whom are you speaking, mother?"

"Of Captain Pierpoint."

"What Captain Pierpoint is that?"

"Herbert Pierpoint," said the duchess. "By the way, is he any relation?"

"Herbert Pierpoint is a first cousin of ours. But what took him so far abroad?" asked Lady Moynehan. "I thought I had missed him."

"You know very well what took him abroad," replied the duchess.

"I? Not at all. Some disappointment?"

"Like Fred Travers, who proposes to some one every season, and works off his rejection by travelling over half the world, before he makes his next offer."

"Pleaze, mamzie, may I have some more *pudden*?" shouts my Lord Algernon, fourteenth Earl of Moynehan.

The elder ladies exchanged glances. It was the birth of this heir to Moynehan which had caused Pierpoint's disappearance.

"And you have been a great traveller, too?" Lady Moynehan said, turning to Alured.

"Where have you been chiefly?" asked another. "Egypt, or the Great Salt Lake. I'm told everybody goes to the Mormons, or to South America, or round the world, now a days."

"Hardly so far as that, yet; only to the Mediterranean, and the Crimea, and Canada."

"Were you in the Crimea?" asked Lady Agatha with interest. There were hopes of hers buried on Cathcart's Hill.

"Yes. During the latter part of the war."

"Were you ever in a battle?" the child wanted to know. "Mamzie, when I'm a man I may go to a battle, too, mayn't I?" He spoke of it as if it were a pastime like picking daisies, or driving the pony that dragged the grass-cutter across the lawn.

"Yes, if you're good."

But lunch was now over, and as the ladies swept out of the room, Lady Moynehan—

"We, too, have a great battle in progress at croquet—more harmless than those you are accustomed to, I daresay. You shall have a ball if you care to play. We spend most of our time out of doors."

They were soon hard at work. The croquet ground was in the middle of the garden, and this garden surrounded the house. The hedge-rows were all aflame with the burning red blossoms of the rhododendron bushes ; belts of bright geraniums bordered the pathways with scarlet fringe ; masses of colour repeated themselves about the lawn, like an inlaid mosaic of costly gems upon a ground of malachite ; and behind, high above the whitewashed roofs, was a screen of trees, notable among them the tall acacias, bending their graceful heads beneath the burden of a million snow-flakes. The gentle summer wind came rustling through the branches, waking up to discontented murmurs the drooping languid leaves, and bearing in its bosom the fragrance it gathered as it came—sighing past beds of crocus and cowslip, or lingering upon sweet fields of new-mown hay.

Out here upon the lawn Alured had leisure to observe his companions. Croquet, as the world well knows, is devised to suit the idle and the busy, both. There are spare moments when it is yet not imperative to talk, and others when you can be very active without doing

a stroke of work. More than once he found his eyes fastened upon Millicent. Was this indeed the same small child he had known at Moynehan? Not that Miss St. Helier in budding into womanhood had grown very big. She was altogether on a small scale: a *petite* figure; a childlike, babyish face; sweet, innocent, pleading eyes; and a pure girlish treble voice. But Millicent the child was far apart from the fashionable young lady, Miss St. Helier; so it seemed at least to Alured. Rather distant and scornful in her manner, they had barely exchanged a dozen words as yet. Really glad to meet an old friend, but resenting her aunt's making so much of him, she did not see why Lady Moynehan should make such a fuss about Mr. Frere. All that morning his praises had been sung. The duchess told them he was too charming; the Ladies Markham prepared for something quite wonderful; Millicent was again and again reminded of the days when Alured had been her favourite playmate. Lady Moynehan said more than was necessary perhaps; more certainly than Millicent liked. So she pouted, and would not be agreeable; standing when

unemployed with the game, pensively tracing fantastic figures upon the ground with her croquet mallet, making it follow the thoughts that flashed fast through her mind, like the swallow's shadow flitting o'er the surface of a mirrored lake. Picturesquely dressed as usual. I don't think that Millicent did it on purpose, but her costume somehow had a natural tendency to fall into lines of beauty. The effect was always pretty. This day she had complained of cold, so my lady made her wear a shawl—a rich creamy yellow shawl, soft and pliant in substance, falling down as low as the skirts of her dress. The mass of opaque yellow colour brought out in strong contrast the dazzling fairness of her hand and wrist, as she held back her shawl to play. Her complexion was pure dead white, smooth as wax, but fresh healthiness mantled on the cheek, and in the tremulous mobile lip, her chiefest beauty,—flexible, not full, and yet so soft and ripe.

At last Alured went up and spoke to her.

“What a nice game this is!” he said with enthusiasm.

It was not a very wise remark perhaps, but

Millicent had no right to conclude he was going to talk rubbish, and snub him.

"It is a horribly stupid game, I think. I wonder why people are so mad about it."

Time was when at such a reply Alured would have shut up like a limpet, but he was a man now ; so he put up his hand quickly to his nose, and felt for his handkerchief.

"Whatever is the matter, Mr. Frere?" inquired Miss Millicent, quite hurriedly.

"I was only feeling if my nose was off."

"Off?"

"Yes, bitten off."

"By me? How absurd you are!" she cried, bursting into a merry laugh. This little joke was enough to put her into a good humour. "I'm afraid I was dreadfully rude. But do you play croquet often, Mr. Frere?"

"Not very often."

"Have you ever played before in your life, or seen a croquet mallet, or heard the rules?"

"Well, to tell you the truth I haven't, and that's why I like the game so much. Any one can play what they know, but this game I can play without knowing it at all."

“Have you learnt to dance yet?”

“What! do you remember that?”

“How long ago it seems. I have grown quite an old woman since then.”

“I should have known you again anywhere.”

“Should you?” replied Millicent rather distantly, relapsing suddenly from cordiality into coldness.

“Miss St. Helier, I wish you would let me ask you a question. Something that is very much on my mind.”

Millicent stared at him. She could hardly open her big brown eyes wide enough. What was coming next? He could read her astonishment in her face.

“I want to be told—you know I don’t often meet such grand people, and I never knew a real duchess to speak to in my life before—what ought I to call her when I speak to her,—your grace?”

“Or ma’am, like the queen, or my lady, or your royal mightiness?” cried Millicent, laughing heartily. “Is that all? We say duchess, and duke, simply; that’s what we say in this big world of ours, Mr. Frere.”

"I wish you'd attend to your game," the duchess said, quite angrily, from the other end of the ground.

"There, Mr. Frere; you can go and practise. Go and talk to her grace."

The duchess rated him very soundly for leaving his ball the wrong side of the hoop.

"It's against all science."

"But I know nothing about the game, duchess."

"Don't you? Fancy. Well I must teach you. What a pity to-morrow's Sunday."

"We might have a game by candle-light. Lamps on the hoops, and a bit of phosphorus on each ball."

"Thank you," said Lady Moynehan. "I don't want my grass burnt."

"It's a capital idea," the duchess remarked meditatively. "What put it into your head?"

But Alured had already made his escape back to Millicent. One way or another he managed to be with her a good deal the rest of that day. After dinner, the whole party broke up into fragments. Mr. Tredcroft, who had come down late in the day, monopolized

Lady Adeline, carrying her off to a distant corner, where strange ears could not hear their lover-like whispers. Lady Agatha played, now the harp, now the piano, or the organ in the hall, as the fancy seized her; for she was an admirable musician, and asked no better amusement than to play to herself without thought of audience or effect. The elder ladies gossiped by a low table, in the soft silvery light of a reading lamp. Millicent thus fell to Alured. All the girl's patronizing airs had fled; and she found that Alured's conversation had more of life and vigour in it than she found in the lisplings of her London partners. Our hero by this time, knew men and manners; and could talk of what he had seen.

Perhaps the scene softened Millicent a little, and made her less exacting. They were seated at the edge of the lawn by the open window, with their backs to what there was of light in the room. In front was the quiet sky, all around the sweet scented air of the summer night. There was repose in the darkening landscape, peace in the pale amber tones of

the fading west. Down in the hollow bottom below the meadows, the river wound among the tree-trunks, like the glittering white coils of a silver-skinned serpent. No noise broke the stillness save the tinkle of a bell from the cattle that browsed in the lank herbage near the stream, or the cawing of a few belated rooks hurrying home to their tree-tops behind the house. The day's toil was at an end; nature was sinking fast to rest.

"What a sin and a shame to be indoors such a night as this," said Millicent in a low voice.

"There are countries where they turn night into day. Would you like to live in them?"

"I turn night into day often in London as it is."

"In hot rooms, dancing."

"And very pleasant too. Have you never turned night into day?"

"Not in that way."

"How then?"

"Sometimes in the backwoods waiting for moose, with my feet stone-cold, and an icicle to my nose; sometimes after ibex on a Spanish mountain; sometimes on guard; once under a

bridge, looking out for deserters ; another time in a crazy felucca, off Apes Hill, becalmed."

" I think you had the best of it, Mr. Frere. How I do wish I was a man too ! "

" Do you want to shoot, and fish, and fight, and smoke, and swear ? "

" Not all that, quite ; but I pine for more freedom. I want to see the world and life, not to keep in one humdrum round. "

" We shall have you lecturing some day on ' woman's rights. ' "

" Rights ! Is it not enough to make a woman angry, that you men should have all the good things of the world, and we, only what you choose to give us ? Why should I be obliged to dance only with the men who ask me, and not with the men I like ? Why should I want a chaperone to take me out, holding me like a puppy by a chain, for fear I should run away ? "

" I don't think you have much to complain of. And I should be sorry to see women brought near the dirty ways that we must traverse. I hope my sisters may never know as much as I do. If you could only realize

how bad the world is! But there is no reason why you should."

"I don't choose to be shut, like an Eastern woman, between four walls."

"I would have you fenced in, not by bars, but by your own pure hearts."

There was a long pause.

"How nice it must be to have brothers," said Millicent at length. "I never had one."

"Do you wish you had? Why?"

"He would keep me out of mischief, and tell me what I ought to do. I think I should mind what he said."

"Meaning that you mind no one now?"

"They bore so, lecturing about this and that."

"It isn't every one who knows how to give advice."

"I'll give you a piece of advice, Mr. Frere."

"And that is ——?"

"Not to think too highly of us women. We're not half so good as you imagine."

The little lady wagged her head very knowingly; and as the candlesticks were brought in, shook Alured's hand warmly, and trotted off with the other ladies upstairs.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN IN POSSESSION.

“Je ne vous aime pas, Hylas ;
Je n'en saurois dire la cause ;
Je sais seulement un chose,
C'est que je ne vous aime pas.”

Bussy : *Comte de Rabutin.*

THE next day was Sunday—a calm peaceful Sabbath morning. Quite quiet and still, but for the shimmer among the leaves, or the music of the birds chirping their matin song beneath the blue arch of heaven's cathedral. The happy, harmless birds! They reminded Alured somehow of Millicent. She was like a wee sweet-voiced bird, that you might take into your hands and stroke its soft plumage, or feed with sugar from between your lips. A gentle modest little robin she appeared that Sunday, as she fluttered about the breakfast table in neat brown silk, demurely dressed for church. Yesterday she had been as gay as a humming-bird; but to-day it pleased her

to be sobered down, subdued, and unpretending in dress and manner.

It was by accident, of course, that Alured and she got side by side, when the party started off for the morning service in the village; accident that he found himself seated near her in the Moynehan pew; accident that made her his companion on the way home. A chapter of such accidents makes up the romance of a life. Each is a link in the strong chain of circumstance by which the future is bound for ever. A man looks back and wonders how he came to like that girl so much. When and how; on what occasion did he first realize that her voice was the only music he cared to hear,—that the room was dark and desert when she was out of it,—when he knew her step upon the stairs or could swear to the rustle of her dress a dozen yards off? Accident brought them together; chance and good management created the opportunities by which a first liking was welded into the true steel of life-long attachment. Thus by chance, Alured renewed his acquaintance with Miss St.

Helier ; by good luck in that great country-house, he came to know her well. It was soon for him to feel how thoroughly she had enslaved him ; still he was very loth to leave on Monday morning. He seemed to have been so short a time at King's Lilies. The pleasant hours had sped away on silver wings ; and Monday, with its call to camp and Gaynor's peevish scoldings came all too soon. Lady Moynehan extracted something from the bitterness of departure, by pressing him to come again.

"We're always at home on Wednesdays," she said.

"I find it so hard to get leave," Alured replied, hanging his head rather.

"Lord Waltham comes from Banktown all the way," cries Millicent, tossing her head, "whenever we ask him, and he's in the Guards." As if her majesty's household troops were always specially busy.

"I'm adjutant, and the colonel hates my going way," Alured went on, secretly rejoicing that Miss St. Helier wished him to come again.

“Bring your colonel too,” said Lady Moynehan. “We shall be very glad to see him ; and you—always mind that, Mr. Frere.”

Alured looked up thankfully, and at Millicent, but she would give him no such encouragement. Perhaps as the young man drove off her conscience smote her, for she put on her hat, and walked quickly across the shrubbery at the end of the lawn, past which, after a long detour, came the road to camp. Alured saw her there, leaning against an elm-tree, waiting,—waiting for what ? To see him pass ? His heart gave a great jump, while his eyes brightened at the thought and what followed, for the wheels of his dog-cart roused her, and as she looked up and saw him, she made him a little wave of her hand which sent him home happy as a king.

But the camp soon awakened him from such dreams. The end of a holiday is but a dreary business to a grown-up man or schoolboy. After it, the daily routine of Latin grammar, or duties as dry, seems a thousand times more dull than before. Now, the camp and all that was in it, was hateful to Alured. The straight

lines of ugly huts, ranging back stiffly row behind row, the bare bald roads, treeless, verdureless, flowerless, the rigidly uncompromising figures in staring red and white that spotted the landscape here and there like poppies in a sparse-sown wheat field,—how different to King's Lilies! Charming women in a cosy house are pleasanter company than a soldier servant in your own dingy hut, reminding you that "the colonel, sor, has been tearing and swearing, and chow-rowing, sor, becos you wasn't back, sor." There was poetry in the one, in the other naught but the baldest prose.

Gaynor was already in the orderly-room by the time Frere got to it.

"Really, Mr. Frere, this has been most inconvenient," he began.

Everything had gone wrong. The general had sent for some special information which, in the adjutant's absence, could not be supplied. No one could draft a letter like Frere. A question had been raised by the War Office about the baggage fund, but the answer was locked up in Alured's breast. Three charges or indictments for a court-martial were waiting

the adjutant's return. No one else could frame them. Our hero had to gulp down the tender memories of his nascent love, and buckle to.

He saw no more of the colonel till that afternoon at dusk, when the great man came over to sign letters and documents for that evening's post. As soon as a dozen sprawling "George Gaynors" had earned him his day's pay, the colonel got up as he was going out, and asked if there was nothing more.

"Nothing? You are sure? I am going to dine at the bishop's, and I don't want to be disturbed in the middle of my soup."

"Nothing, sir, but—only—" Alured remarked hesitatingly, "I was told, sir, if you would care to go over to—to the house where I have been staying, they would always be at home on Wednesdays."

"Oh, really," said Gaynor, lifting his eyebrows. "Thank you; you're very good I'm sure. It's not much in my way though, that sort of thing." He was fiddling now with the end of a cigar which he had first taken out of his case, and was protruding his nether lip in a critical,

contemptuous fashion, either at the tobacco or the invitation.

“Who are your friends, and where do they put up?”

“At King’s Lilies, about twelve miles off.”

“King’s Lilies? King’s Lilies? Why the name is quite familiar. Ah, yes; it’s one of Lord Moynehan’s places. Rather cool of your friends, Master Frere, to christen their villa,—modern gothic, I suppose, spiked all over like a vinegar cruet, with fifteen inches of private ground—after a real place. Gad, it’s nothing nowadays. You meet Beauvoirs, and Badmin-tons, and cockney castles in every street in the suburbs. I wonder the cat’s-meat man don’t date his bills from Osborne, or the butter seller call his dairy Buckingham Palace.”

Now Alured saw at once that the colonel had fallen into a trap. But he only said,—“The ladies would have been glad to see you, sir.”

“Ladies, eh? Who are there?”

“Two.”

“Mother and daughter? Widow woman, I suppose, all alone in the world, but fair and forty.”

"A widow; yes, sir. But the young lady's not a daughter. She's a niece."

"Old cheesemonger dead, eh? Cut up deuced well, I don't doubt. Niece to have all the money with the widow thrown in. Well, Mr. Frere, I wish you joy. Mind you ask me to the wedding."

"I will, sir. But—you cannot come on Wednesday?"

"No, no, Frere. I think not. Another day perhaps."

"I will tell Lady Moynehan so. She expressly wished me to ask you, sir."

The shot told. Gaynor was not easily disconcerted, but he looked at Frere pretty sharply for a moment, and then said quite cordially,—

"You said Wednesday? Well, I'm not quite sure. We'll see about it."

That night Gaynor was in his usual place at the mess-table, somewhere in the centre, whence he stormed at the waiters and glared at the youngsters who would not drink expensive wines, and so lower his own charges. It was all a fiction about his dining at the bishop's.

If any one had asked him why he hadn't gone, there would have been some ready reply, that a note had come at the last moment putting him off, or that it was so infernally wet he had sent an excuse. His subalterns, knowing him by heart, seldom asked any questions. But during dinner some one inquired if he meant to dine at mess next guest night?

"It's Wednesday, isn't it? No, I think not," he replied slowly; "Frere and I are going over to Lady Moynehan's. It's her day, Wednesday, you know. Frere, do they give you anything to eat over there, or shall we order some dinner late here at the mess?"

The remark was heard by all at table, and received in various ways. The elders smiled, as they did always when the colonel talked big about his great friends; others rubbed their eyes in the brightness of this flash from a bright and an unknown world. Bloxam, known everywhere now as Barnacle Bloxam, and jackal in ordinary to the colonel, was mad with jealousy. He had forgotten Alured's former acquaintance with the Moynehans in Ireland, and thought the colonel was showing undue favouritism.

Then the colonel went on talking to Frere, to whom hitherto he had seldom thrown a word except on duty.

"Whom had you staying in the house at King's Lilies?" he asked.

"Only two or three people, sir. The Duchess of Greyfriars and her two daughters. Mr. Tredcroft came down late on the Saturday."

"Yes, I know; he's member for Boulder-shire, and a fine property he's got in those parts. Duchess is wide awake—all there, I can tell you."

"Was the duke looking well?" asked Bloxam, pompously.

"There isn't any," Gaynor interposed, with a sneer. "It's extinct."

Bloxam's discomfiture was considered an excellent joke. Poor little Barnacle! Never was a disciple more impressed by his master's greatness, more eager to imitate his every word and action, more ruthlessly snubbed by the object of his worship. He aped Gaynor in his dress and in his talk. By constant observation he had picked up some of the jargon, and could always tell you about everybody, provided always that

they had been spoken of first by the colonel. He could gabble off their names then, fast enough; but sometimes even with this guide his tongue tripped, and he was puzzled by the pronunciation. Names like Cholmondeley, Majoribanks, and Bletherumskite, brought him into dire confusion more than once, but he knew them all intimately, of course. To show his familiarity, he generally tacked on a soubriquet or a Christian name shortened.

"Not know Jack Gascoigne of the Prancers?" he'd say. "Capital fellow, Jack."

"Where did you meet him, pray?" asks the colonel.

"Oh, I met him at Epsom."

"On the course I suppose. A general sort of acquaintanceship that."

"Like his conversation with the duke, sir," says some one else, "of which he was so proud. Do you remember when he told us H.R.H. had spoken to him?"

"Well, Bloxam, what did he say?"

"He said, 'Damme, sir, where's your chin strap?'"

Bloxam kept a dog-cart solely for the

colonel's use, who ordered it to meet him by midnight trains or take him to Covert, just as he thought fit. Unless Gaynor had had the refusal, Bloxam hardly dared to call the trap his own any day. In this trap Frere went with his chief to King's Lilies the following Wednesday.

From that time forth Gaynor treated his adjutant with increasing respect. Lady Moynehan made so much of Alured, that the colonel began to see new beauties in him. Perhaps Frere was the son of nobody much, still he had a number of excellent friends. So when Frere wanted leave afterwards, there was little or no difficulty.

"Going to King's Lilies again, boy?" he would say with a friendly laugh. "You'll have to come forward one of these days if you're so attentive. Which is it?" And Alured blushing, the colonel goes on to say; "Plump for the widow. She's my form,—handsome jointure, good position. Why you might exchange into the Guards, get into the House, anything you please. The young un's too pert." Millicent disliked Gaynor, and took no pains to conceal it. "Besides, she's only just out of the school-

room. Make hay while the sun shines. I won't keep you."

Alured now, one way or another, was at King's Lilies four or five times a week. It was just a pleasant ride, and back by night through the sweet-smelling fir-forest, the distance seemed nothing. The ladies looked upon him almost as one of the family. As often as not he was the only visitor, almost always the only man. There were few neighbours in these parts, and among them no rivals, except, perhaps a stray guardsman or friend from the court coming to see Lady Moynehan. Millicent was too young as yet to possess declared admirers of her own, so Alured made the best of his time.

A man must be a very miserable dog who cannot point to certain passages in his life which deserve to be marked with a white stone. Happy days; happy weeks; happy years,—to each and all such luck has come or is coming. This one remembers among his sweetest hours the few that followed his first engagement; that man exults *sub rosâ* in the relief brought by the removal of a scolding tongue who had held half

his life in bondage; another was supremely happy when his book burst into a blaze of success before the critics had awakened to the fact of his existence. You, reader, let us hope may be happy too,—for a time—when your rich relative leaves you that deer-park and ten thousand a year, when you gain your seat in the Upper House, or are gazetted a field marshal. In after-days, Alured Frere looked back upon the times of which we are now writing as among the happiest in his life. He was constantly with Millicent. For long hours they sat together in front of the same tree in the park, sketching, with a cow or a tame jackass to do propriety, and in the far distance, perhaps, Lady Moynehan's voice chiding them for exposing themselves to a chill. *Tête-à-tête* walk; pleasant evenings at the piano, while auntie dozed off in front of the cracking logs which an English June sometimes requires; or idle delicious afternoons under the wing of the bowery laurestinas on the lawn, talking about nothing much, but just watching the white clouds, as lazy as themselves, float leisurely across the blue sky above.

But it was a blow to Alured to find one day another man in possession; still less would he have liked the remarks with which this man,—lying full length on the grass, close by which the ladies sat,—greeted their arrival, as he and Gaynor drove up the avenue.

“Whom on earth have we here?” he asked.

“It must be Mr. Frere,” cried Millicent, “and the colonel.”

“Who are they, aunt?” asked the man on the grass.

“From the garrison.”

“Soldier officers! Oh dear!”

“You need not growl and groan as if you were ashamed of your own cloth; you know you were a soldier yourself once,” said Millicent rather indignantly.

“Now I’m out of the wood I can afford to holloa. They’re an interesting lot.”

“*I* think they’re very nice.”

“I make you a present of them, all. They’re too charming; so full of humour, and their range of conversation is so wide. They never bore you with *shop* or their own personal experiences.”

"Other people talk about themselves, too ; great travellers for instance."

"Meaning me ?" laughed the man, who was no other than Herbert Pierpoint. "You shall hear no more of Nagasaki or Honolulu from me."

"For these and all other mercies——"

"Millicent, how can you !" said her ladyship.

And then they all got up to welcome the new comers. The ladies shook hands, Gaynor and Pierpoint exchanged nods, and almost at the same moment other visitors arrived. Presently, there were a dozen people on the lawn, mostly strangers to Alured. Gaynor got on well enough and so did Pierpoint, but Frere felt neglected. It so happened that he knew no one. He wandered about listless and miserable, till suddenly Miss St. Helier came and rated him soundly for looking so gloomy.

"What on earth is the matter with you, Mr. Frere ?"

"I feel like Robinson Crusoe."

"What do you mean ?"

“I’ve no one to speak to.”

“There are lots of people about, too. Don’t be absurd. I won’t be your Friday, at any rate,” said Millicent, moving away.

“Oh, please don’t leave me! Throw me a hen-coop, or a plank, or something.”

“I can’t promise to float you. Go and talk to some one. There’s Captain Pierpoint—you know him.”

“I don’t—and I don’t want to.”

“Mr. Frere!”

“Are you particularly fond of him?”

“Why do you ask? Of course we like him. He’s our cousin, to begin with. At least he was poor Lord Moynehan’s cousin; and it was very unfortunate for him that—I mean, you know, that he would have got the title but for aunt’s marriage.”

“That accounts for his making himself so much at home.”

“It accounts for Aunt Moynehan treating him civilly, which she is bound to do in her own house. The same duty is not imperative on you; and that is why”—she spoke severely—“you don’t do it, I imagine.”

"I am not aware that I have been uncivil to him. Why, I haven't even spoken to him."

"That's just where it is."

"But he ought to have spoken first to me. He knows me well enough, only he doesn't choose to recognise me."

"Why, where did he know you?"

"My father and he were in the same regiment, and we met in London when I went up to get my first outfit."

"When you were a little boy, you mean, and came to Moynehan? How absurd! As if he could remember your face after all that time. But I'll go and tell him."

"Pray don't, Miss St. Helier. I have no desire to be patronized."

"I'm sure you're very disagreeable. If this is all we are to expect when you come over——"

"I won't come again."

Millicent actually stamped her foot. "There's many a true word—you know the rest," she said. "We are going to London next week."

Alured's face fell.

"Not really?"

"Yes. Captain Pierpoint has persuaded

aunt to open her house in Carlton Gardens, and we're going to spend the rest of the season in London. Isn't it nice?"

Alured did not think it would be at all nice. He really hated Pierpoint now.

"I knew I should never like him," he said, with a scowl.

"Mr. Frere, you must not abuse our relations."

"Mayn't I say what I think?"

"Not if it's rude."

"Miss St. Helier, you had better give me up. I shall never know how to behave myself."

"You won't try."

"I'm sorry if I've offended you."

"You've not offended me, but I wanted you particularly to like Captain Pierpoint. He's just the sort of man for you to know."

Millicent in her innocent worldly-mindedness thought that the lessons of this *blasé* man of fashion could not but be useful to Alured. Perhaps Pierpoint might have learnt something to his advantage from the chivalrous young fellow.

"Shall we ever see you in London?"

Millicent went on ; she seemed to have forgotten her anger and her other guests. "Aunt means to have 'at homes' every week. Will you come and show us whether you have learnt to dance yet?"

"Certainly, if I'm asked, when I can get away ; but it's rather a business for me, going to London."

"Oh, it depends upon the attraction, of course." Millicent never thought that it depended upon the length of a man's purse. What did she know about money? Aunt paid everything.

"The attractions would be enough to take me to the North Pole."

"What a pretty speech! I hope you are going to be reasonable. Do come and speak to Captain Pierpoint."

"If you insist!"

"I do. Stay—I'll call him—Herbert!"

"What is it, Millicent?"

It rather jarred upon Alured to find the "man about town" on terms of such easy intimacy at King's Lilies. He called Lady Moynehan "aunt," though she was the same

age, about, as himself, and Miss St. Helier "Millicent," as coolly as possible. There was much the same off-hand manner about Pierpoint that Alured remembered of old.

"Come here," said Millicent. "Do you remember Mr. Frere?"

"Mr. Frere?"

"Major Frere's son," said Alured, shortly.

"Why, of course; you're the little chap I saw in town during the Crimean war. How you *have* grown. I should never have known you. And how is your father, Frere? If you're writing, remember me. Well, I must say I should never have known you."

Alured thought Pierpoint's manner offensive in the extreme, and could hardly answer civilly.

"People generally do alter in half a dozen years."

"And not always for the better," remarks Miss Millicent.

"Which of us is that for?" asked Pierpoint. "But time improves some people. Lady Bodington for instance. I left her six years ago, a pale, sallow-faced woman, and now I find her with a brilliant complexion and yellow hair."

"Both new, I suppose?"

"Brand-new, from Madame——"

"I hope I shall never come to that," Millicent said.

"You're too honest, surely!" cried Alured.

"I wouldn't answer for you or any other woman who thought she could improve her appearance without risk," was Pierpoint's remark.

"Thank you both," said Millicent, dropping a curtsey. "I think I'll leave you to fight it out."

But the conversation failed when she had left them. Pierpoint asked one or two questions, in a careless indifferent tone, then strolled off after Millicent.

By-and-by, when it became necessary to make a move, Alured took stock as it were of that day's pleasure, and found that he had not enjoyed himself in the least. It was all through Pierpoint. What did he mean by doing the honours of the house, seeing them to their trap after the ladies had said good-bye on the lawn, pressing cigars on them, and waving his hand to them as they drove off? It was clearly

evident that Alured was no longer to have his own way at King's Lilies. What had brought the man there to mar his happiness ?

For years Lady Moynehan and Pierpoint had not been on speaking terms. His rage and disappointment at the birth of an heir to Moynehan were not calmed down by the contents of the old lord's will. Most of the personality went to Miss Millicent St. Helier, "my dear wife's niece," so it was set down on the will. After this Pierpoint would hold no further communication with Lady Moynehan. He left the country to travel in far-off lands. When, after years of absence, he returned to England, it was she who tried to make friends. She wanted to be at peace with her dear husband's nearest relative, and she wrote at once to ask Pierpoint to go to King's Lilies. Smothering his scruples, he went for a day,—and stayed a week. His views changed when he saw Millicent ; Lady Moynehan was forgiven—a pretty little "cousin" with a handsome fortune was a considerable attraction.

It was during this visit that Alured met him at King's Lilies.

CHAPTER IV.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

“Go not, happy day,
From the shining fields,
Go not, happy day,
Till the maiden yields.”

TENNYSON : *Maud*.

ALURED drove back from King's Lilies in a very dejected state of mind. It seemed to him as if at the approaching departure of the ladies for London the sun had gone in, and the future was like a dull cheerless landscape with not a ray of light in all its grey perspective. Nor did Gaynor soothe him much by expatiating upon the excellencies of this Pierpoint, whose sudden reappearance had made the outlook appear doubly dark and gloomy. Here at length there was a rival, with ever so many superior chances. It was clear to Alured that the happy days were at an end. The short summer had ended ; autumn was come all too soon with its bleak winds and falling leaves like vain regrets gone past recall.

Naturally before many hours had passed Alured began debating with himself, whether he ought not to go to King's Lilies again, just to say good-bye. After all their kindness to him it was only right that he should thank them before they went to town. But then that Pierpoint repelled him. He loathed the notion of meeting the man in that house. And yet this repugnance melted away as his hunger increased upon him. Soon he was ready to face a dozen Pierpoints, if only he might look on Millicent again. What wonder then that the mare was saddled and brought round after lunch on the fourth day, and that he galloped over to King's Lilies almost without drawing rein.

My lady was out. She had gone into the village. And Miss St. Helier? Miss St. Helier was in the drawing-room—and there he found her having tea, all by herself, seated near the open window that gave upon the lawn, before a tiny table with silver tray, and service of fragile china,—old-fashioned white biscuit, but not whiter than the little hand that moved so securely among the dainty cups. * Millicent—with

her childish figure, owning hardly a curve to prove that she had budded yet into womanhood; the pretty flush upon her cheek, of such a tender delicate pink that she might have been a choice piece of china herself.

"Mr. Frere, I am so glad you've come." There was something very soft and caressing in her manner, and the sweet light in her eyes, as they brightened up at his entrance, sent a thrill through and through him.

"I wanted to see the last of you, but I couldn't make up my mind to face Captain Pierpoint."

"Don't distress yourself, Mr. Frere. Cousin Herbert has been gone these days and days."

"That's a relief."

"Sit down, and don't use bad language. Will you have some tea? Aunt won't be long; she's only gone into the village to see some of her old pets."

"Lady Moynehan is very good. They'll miss her, won't they? the old women and the school children?"

"And no one will miss me."

"I shall."

"Indeed," remarked Millicent, opening her

eyes quite wide, not looking at him without flinching. It began to dawn upon her that she was temporarily mistress of the house, and that she ought to assume an air of reserve. In a cold hard tone she went on.

“You’ll get over that.”

“I feel as if I were going to have a tooth out.”

“You’re not afraid of pain are you? Take chloroform.”

“Not of physical pain; but just now I’m ready to burst into a boo-hoo, and cry, because you are all going away.”

“So big, and such a baby!” cried Millicent, with a little scornful laugh.

“Don’t laugh at me; I’m really very miserable.”

Millicent was as quick-tempered and impulsive as a child. She flew as fast from mirth to sorrow, as she forgot her own grief in those of others. Wittingly she would hurt no one—still less Alured Frere. So she tried a few words of comfort. It was not far to London after all, and they would be back by the autumn; perhaps they might go over to Ireland, and he could pay

another visit to Moynehan. The kind encouragement of her voice did more to console him than the vague hopes held out in the future. Did Millicent really like him? Suddenly the idea flashed through his brain to ask her.

But how? or when? It is no easy matter to overcome the *vis inertiae* of shyness—to speak the first simple word after which all comes so easy.

No sooner had Alured resolved to unburthen his mind to Millicent, than he grew tongue-tied, or floundered about the bush with such intensely uninteresting inanities, that his companion wondered what had come over him. He did not mend matters by blurting out, after a silence of some length,—

“Miss St. Helier, I have something to say to you, but I—I hardly know how to begin.”

“Then don’t begin,” answered Millicent, saucily, thereby dashing all his hopes to the ground. Alured required lifting rather than cold water. Complete prostration seemed to follow Millicent’s reply.

It would be difficult to say what prompted her to speak thus. Alured assumed that she

was annoyed at his broaching the subject at that particular moment. A man more deeply versed in the humours of the wayward sex might have interpreted her words into direct encouragement to proceed. Of course Millicent had guessed what was coming. She was a woman, albeit still young, and could read Alured's face like an open page. It was as if she had dared him to go on, and he did himself little good in her eyes by his cowardice and hesitation.

Miss St. Helier, with many of her sex, doubtless preferred a wooer who would not be too easily cowed. In trying to win a woman, it does not do to be too humble and self-depreciatory, too diffident and wavering. How, otherwise, can the success of some men be explained? How did Z get his wife? What did Mrs. Z, who is everything that is charming, see in him, that she should have endowed him with all her wealth, and with herself, a thousand times more precious than her money or her acres? She gave in because Z was determined; and she came, through his persistence, to believe him to be all that he painted himself. We all call X a

swaggering snob—we who think we know him at his true value. Yet, as the saying is, X goes down with the women. Why? Because he asserts himself, assumes airs of superiority before which his victims succumb. If X, or Y, or Z, why not Alured Frere? He had as much right to assert himself as most men. Be bold Alured! Don't waste time in professions. Advance to the attack with colours flying and drums beating. Speak up man, and tell her what a fine fellow you are; how clever, how handsome, and how good. Dazzle her; humbug her. What matter, if in the end you are found out? Husbands and wives generally find each other out, sooner or later; and she would have been a happy woman, whose discoveries were limited to what a wife might have found in Alured Frere. But his silence and shamefacedness continued, and then Alured began to apprehend that he was doomed to fail altogether. It was quite clear she would not help him—not one jot. At the stage in which their conversation stood, it was clearly his turn to speak next, and yet what could he say after the ungracious cue she had given him?

All at once Lady Moynehan came in.

"They told me you were here, Mr. Frere. I should have been so sorry to have missed you. Has Millicent asked you to stay to dinner? Why what has come over you both? Quarrelling?"

Millicent laughed, and then pouted. Frere got red—although he was three-and-twenty, he could not give over blushing at times—and muttered an unintelligible word or two.

"Mr. Frere won't be right," Millicent said, "till he has it out. It's that tooth."

"A tooth?" asked Lady Moynehan, innocently.

"Yes; a metaphorical molar. You'd better try and doctor him. I'm going, myself, for a brisk walk round by the river. The sun's nearly down, and I'm getting quite chilled here."

She had passed through the window, and fluttered out along the garden-path by the flaming rhododendron bushes, almost before Frere could find his tongue.

Now it had never crossed Lady Moynehan's mind to suspect that any *tendresse* existed

between these two young people. Millicent was still such a child, and Alured so evidently unlikely to be a marrying man. Besides, they had known each other for years. It was in all innocence then that she said, observing Alured looking askance after Millicent,—

“Why don’t you go too?”

“Do you think I might?”

“Why not? We don’t dine till eight.”

Alured needed nothing more. But Millicent was already far into the shrubbery before he overtook her.

Hearing his footstep behind, she turned, and looked surprised.

“Oh, it’s *you*, is it?”

“Yes. Mayn’t I go with you?”

Millicent shrugged her pretty shoulders, as if in utter indifference.

“Shall I bore you?”

“No.” (Ungraciously.) “You can come if you care to. I thought you’d prefer waiting in the house to talk to aunt.”

A dozen yards or two in silence—

“Have you nothing to say for yourself?” asked the young lady at length.

Alured for answer, put one forefinger across the other, and looked at her.

"What a strange creature you are. Why you can't speak out what you mean, is more than I"——

She stopped suddenly, for it seemed as if she were harking back to the matter whence their disagreement had sprung.

"I mean that you are cross—cross, Miss St. Helier. Though I cannot imagine why."

"What should make me cross?"

"That's your own secret. Would you like to let off a little steam? Jump at the ground, or scream, or clench your fists, or—swear?"

"I wish I were allowed to say something strong sometimes. Just——"

Alured made a movement of his lips, shaping the word she would not utter, which she imitated, laughing in spite of herself.

"That'll do you good," cried Frere, as he might have spoken to a child, who had just taken some cough mixture or a powder.

"You're so odd, Mr. Frere!"

"Some men might not consider that a compliment. But I do. I like it."

“Why?”

“Because if I’m odd, I must be different to other people; and I’d rather stand by myself than be included in a great commonplace crowd.”

“But there are lots of odd people in the world,—odd one way or another. I’m odd too.”

“What is your peculiar oddity?”

“I’m odd in my likes and dislikes. I like people, for instance,” said Millicent, looking up at him slyly, “that some of my friends don’t. I’m odd in my ways, and in my dress.”

“Your dress is far from odd.”

“You don’t mean to say that it’s commonplace?” asked Millicent, anxiously.

“It’s quite unique and charming, because it’s so different to what most people put on.”

Millicent acknowledged this pretty speech with a grave curtesy, and from this point amicable relations were restored. By degrees Millicent regained her cheerfulness, and grew quite blithe and merry, as she tripped along the flower-strewn path. Alured felt more in love with her than ever. He longed to take the

pretty wayward creature up into his arms, and hold her thus a prisoner until she promised to become his own ; to kiss and fondle and make much of her till she consented to nestle by his side, and own that she was caught and mastered.

They wandered from one part of the garden and park to another. Millicent said she wanted to see the last of all her pet places and things ; and Alured, identified for months past in all her doings, was bound now to take a share in her farèwells. The pair went from the Italian garden to the paddock, where Millicent fed her own horse with sugar ; thence to see the pet monkey ; from that to gather the last of the violets ; and so back to carve their names on the old oak seat beneath the big elm which stood just over the river freighted with the lilies and their leaves.

When a man has that upon his mind with which Alured's was burdened, time and place have often a potent influence in unloosening his tongue. Some may speak best in a railway carriage, amidst the hurry and rattle of express speed, or under the timely darkness of

a tunnel. Others appropriate to their purpose the corner of a ruined castle, when the rest of the picnic party have strayed elsewhere; or are dumb till they meet their enslavers upon the staircase at a ball, or among the exotics of a warm and scented conservatory. There are men who have been roused to speak only by the storm of the elements, or after a glorious burst across country, or up in a balloon, or goodness knows where. And yet, any one might have been satisfied with the encouragement that nature gave Alured Frere. There was a spell in that delightful stroll beyond the garden walls, by the banks of the still sluggish river. The house lay hidden among the distant trees, revealed only by a distant wisp of smoke curling up towards the bright sapphire sky. There was no one near to disturb them in their talk, save perhaps a drowsy dove that peeped above its nest to wonder who walked so late, or a *roué* trout, jumping in lusty wildness, as if in joy that night had come at last to cloak his fierce mohawk-like revels; or the caw, caw of the rooks, high up in the air.

They were seated at length upon the rustic bench, and he is busy—like any cockney—cutting deep into the back their tell-tale initials. As she bends over to criticize his work, her face is close to his,—so close that the fretted edges of the lace kerchief around her neck brushes against his cheek. The glow of the evening light plays upon plait and tress of her wondrous hair, till it looks so soft and rich and glossy that Alured longs just to touch it. Would she mind, he wonders? or might he smooth and stroke the white hand outstretched to point out improvements in the letter M, and praise thus silently its dimpled beauty? And was Millicent's mind a blank the while? Was she chiding him inwardly for being so cold, and self contained? Her voice had sunk ere this into low whispering tones, caressing him as gently as the breath before dawn wakes all the sleeping lilies of a tranquil lake.

Then suddenly she jumps from her seat, and declares they must go home.

“Not yet, surely. They're not half done.”

But she insists. Not one second longer will she linger. There's danger in the very air.

They leave the river bank, and turn once more towards the house. The path, leading through the trees, is closed at the far end by a fence and stile; arrived at which Alured vaults over, and waits on the further side, saying—

“Let me help you.”

“Please; I can’t jump like that,” answers pretty Millicent, with a smile, as she climbs the steps, and puts out a foot.

It was something to be remembered for all time, the picture she made. Standing above him, framed in by the dark straight pine stems against the yellow sky, in her white summer dress, with its frills, and fringes, and fluttering streamers gathered up over the striped silk petticoat. On each side, the flaunting red blossoms on the bushes gave way before her, and flushed a deeper crimson, ashamed to be outdone in grace and loveliness by this modest maiden flower; the laurels struck their leaves together as if in gentle applause, and the acacias showered down fragrant incense upon her.

Alured was so ravished by the sight that he cried out to her to stay where she was one moment longer.

"In this ridiculous attitude? What *do* you mean?"

"You are like a picture."

"Really Mr. Frere!" But she stayed just a second, and then giving him her hand, jumped to the ground, where she found herself—in his arms.

Flesh and blood could stand it no longer. The touch of her little gloveless hand, had torn asunder the bond that had hitherto restrained him. He was no longer master of himself. In the short time that he held her thus, he had kissed her over and over again. Millicent, taken aback, could say nothing at first, but submit. But soon struggling free, she cried—

"How dare you, how dare you! I declare, Mr. Frere, I was never treated so before."

"Nor shall be so again, Millicent—by any one else."

"I do not understand you. I do not wish to understand you. I won't listen to your explanations. You have overstepped all bounds."

Was not this boisterous wooing to her taste

either? Alured had failed before by being too backward, was he to fail now for being too bold? But he could not withdraw from what he had done. He was committed too far. An answer he must have, an affirmative, or he must prepare to leave Millicent for ever. But the intoxication of the moment when he had pressed her to his heart had not yet passed off. The fragrance of her hair, the sweetness of her breath, the warm living body which he had clasped in his arms, were still his own, part and parcel of his being, steeping all his senses with a glowing passionate joyousness.

"You must hear me, Millicent," taking one of her hands, which she snatched quickly away. "Nay, indeed you shall," he went on, for she made as if she would run off into the house.

"Are you so much offended with me that you cannot forgive me—not when I tell you how much I love you? I know I am not worthy of you, but I do love you so."

She was leaning with her back against the stile which had led to all this. Defiant rather, with hands behind her back, but with

downcast eyes, watching the point of her shoe, as it turned over the tiny pebbles of the gravel path. But never a word came from her lips.

“Will you never speak to me again?”

No answer.

“Shall I go away from the house?”

Not a sign.

“I can make some excuse to Lady Moynehan. Is it to be good-bye ; good-bye, never to meet again?” he said, putting his hand out once more.

A long pause. Then—

“She turned, her bosom shaken with a storm of sighs,
All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel eyes,”

and put her hand into his. It meant forgiveness, acknowledgment that he had won the day.

The compact was sealed there and then, and Millicent did not object to retrace her steps, and walk for half an hour longer.

“You won’t have time to dress,” says he, laughingly reminding her of her hurry to get home.

“I won’t dress. Auntie won’t mind.”

“Will she mind——”

"This? Indeed, Alured, I don't dare to think of it. I suppose I ought to tell her?"

"Yes; at once."

"Why don't *you* do it?"

"I haven't the courage to face her."

"You are a poor timid creature; at least I always thought so till this evening."

"Oh, that's quite a different pair of shoes. I'd do it again, and more, for the same prize."

Millicent did not seek to discuss the question further then. She gave way to the happiness of the moment, remembering only that she was walking hand in hand with Alured Frere.

"Love took up the glass of time and turned it in his glowing hands;

Every moment lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands."

"Wherever have you been, child? What has kept you out so late?" asked her ladyship rather sharply, when Millicent ran upstairs.

"Oh, auntie, it was so fine, and the air was so pleasant."

"And the company so delightful," said Lady Moynehan enigmatically. "Come, young lady, suppose I were to insist upon a full, true, and

particular account of your sayings and doings since I saw you last ?”

“ Oh, Auntie, not now, not now.”

“ And why not now ?”

“ I must go and dress ; I have barely time. It's so late.”

“ It is late, but not too late I hope,” replied Lady Moynehan, still speaking in parables.

Millicent would not understand. She knew she must tell her aunt all that had passed ; but with Alured's kisses still warm upon her cheek, it seemed like sacrilege to speak of the new found love.

And now Lady Moynehan began to be glad that they were going up to London.

CHAPTER V.

IN PURSUIT.

“O winna ye pity me, fair maid,
O winna ye pity me?
O winna ye pity a courteous knight,
Whose love is laid on thee?”

“Ye say ye are a courteous knight,
But I think ye are nane:
I think ye’re but a miller lad
By the colour o’ your claithing.”

The Ballad of the Proud Lady Margaret.

EVENTS had followed each other so quickly that Alured could hardly rouse himself to the reality of his new found happiness. The whole aspect of his life was changed. He pulled his horse up to a walk that he might linger the longer over his journey home. The woods through which he rode, carpeted with fir spindles and scented with the odours of wild flowers, were so hushed that he could hear the beating of his own heart. Not a sound to mar the memory of Millicent’s voice, every note of which still lingered in his ears, not a movement in the sky

or landscape to disturb his reveries of her. A bright summer moon flooded all around in tender haze, lengthening the vistas of the long rides straight cut through the forest, and strewing a thousand strange shadows across his path. The calm of the peaceful night beat in perfect unison with the feelings paramount in his breast. Joy, love, gratitude towards Millicent made his future as beautiful as the face of external nature, sleeping in the rich radiance of the moonlight.

Perhaps his waking thoughts were less rapturous. A man is apt to see things differently of a morning. First of all his conscience smote him that his courtship thus far had been clandestine and unrevealed. It seemed such a poor return to Lady Moynehan for all her kindness, to win Millicent's affections thus without a word. Alured was half disposed to ride over to King's Lilies at once, and make a clean breast of it. But then a certain terror got the upper hand of him. Suppose Lady Moynehan rejected him out of hand, could he face the blow so soon and suddenly? He begged a day or two's grace from himself, hoping that in the meantime Millicent would smooth the way. And this

train of thought brought him to the difficulties of his undertaking. Could he hope to succeed, being so ineligible? What could he offer Millicent? Neither settlements, nor an assured position, nor a comfortable home. It was only natural that Lady Moynehan should think twice before she allowed him to prosecute his suit. If she would only give him time—time to win his spurs and to prove himself worthy. Millicent had promised to wait. He felt capable of any effort to win her in the end.

One other way there might be. Perhaps he could coerce Lady Moynehan into consent. Many years were gone since that curious scene in Moynehan Castle; but the event was not forgotten by Alured, though buried out of sight. What if he traded upon its memory now? He barely gave himself time to consider how this might be done. With the instinct of a loyal gentleman, he dismissed the temptation as unworthy. He had been wrong so far, in having drifted into secret underhand ways; he would not add to his guilt. He blamed himself enough already.

From this time forth a great change came

over Alured Frere. Free from heartaches himself, he had ridiculed them in others. The regimental "ladies' men," who dressed twice a day to walk the streets of a poky garrison town, he had despised. So also had he laughed at the picnic lovers, and ball givers, and punctilious callers of his professional friends. He had his business to attend to. He sought to do his duty with all his might ; differing in this respect considerably from the bulk of his comrades, who, alternating between Ultima Thule and the steps of a London club, to-day ogling a duchess, to-morrow hand in glove with flat-faced aboriginal tribes, sink the shop as readily as they put off their red coats when their short daily sacrifice to military routine is at an end. With the working bees Alured had hitherto been classed, he was about now to enlist in the great army of idlers ; and it came about in this wise.

Naturally since that memorable walk at King's Lilies, he could dream now of nothing but Millicent. The monotony of camp grew loathsome ; he spent his hours in the orderly-room drawing female faces on his blotting

pad, remarkably alike in feature, neglecting entirely the "returns" and his chief's correspondence. On parade he was always wool-gathering, thereby incurring the rapidly increasing contempt of the serjeant-major, which culminated in open aversion, when Alured so far forgot himself as to countermarch by both flanks round the centre, a manœuvre condemned by the serjeant-major as obsolete and useless. But notwithstanding his growing incompetence, Alured might have been content to remain and drive the coach, if Millicent had been further distant. But she was in London, close at hand; and as she made it evident almost at once that she would not correspond with him, he had no alternative for his own peace but to follow her thither. One letter he had received a few days after their departure from King's Lilies, and one only. A prettily worded note, despatched according to promise; but in it Millicent declared that she could not write again.

"I could not bear to live in this deceit for long, Alured. Until aunt is told, and the way made smooth, I cannot write to you, indeed I cannot.

It would be so utterly *wrong*. But you can come and see us often, every day if you like, and that will do as well as writing, won't it? We have just got settled into the house. It's charming. People are continually calling, and we get cards for every night, a dozen deep. Aunt says we must give a dance soon. Of course you'll come. But do come and see us at once. It would be so much nicer if you would answer this letter in person. Do please."

There was more to the same effect, and then Millicent recounted how Lady Moynehan had spoken much of Alured. How she had praised his looks and manners, and expressed such confidence in his high principles. But it was so sad he was so poor. Perhaps she (Lady Moynehan) had done wrong in taking so much notice of him; it might make him discontented with his station in life. "Which is different from ours," Lady Moynehan had said, with more worldly-mindedness and class bigotry than Millicent had ever known her evince before.

"All which, Alured, makes it twice or twenty times as difficult for me to speak to her. I shall not be easy in my mind till I have seen you, for I want you to advise me how to begin. But what-

ever happens, be quite certain, dearest, that I am, and shall always remain,

“Your own,

“M.”

After the receipt of this letter, cart ropes seemed to be dragging Alured to London. Gaynor was away on leave; so Alured was free to come and go almost as he pleased. How could he grudge the couple of fivers, which Bloxam called the dirt-cheap price of a trip to the little village. Alured spent more than that in season tickets and cab hire, before a week was over.

And how much the better was he for it?

He soon discovered that great ladies are different in London and in the country. It was one thing to have the *entrée* at King's Lilies, another to knock at the door in Carlton Gardens. Lady Moynehan and Millicent were not always visible. It was not that the former was ungracious, or that the latter had forgotten the love passages between herself and Alured Frere, but there was so much to occupy them. When Alured did get in, he found generally a host of other people in the drawing-room.

Favoured men and favoured women who could talk the shibboleth of fashion, while Alured's lips were sealed. They spoke of things in which he had no share: last night's ball, to-night's, to-morrow's, flower-shows, fine arts, tragedy, politics, gossip. These people made such talk the business of their lives, and excelled in it as Squaretoes does in Pliocene fossils, or Holdforth, the missionary, in the languages of the South Sea islanders. Alured held his ground, knowing all the time that he looked like a fool. A man looks like a fool who cannot join in general conversation, and sits mumchance for forty consecutive minutes. Yet he loved Millicent all the more, and blessed her for her kind considerateness, when now and then she came to where he sat fiddling with his tea-cup, or staring at her photograph book which he had helped to illuminate and knew already by heart from end to end, and spoke a soft sweet word or two in a half whisper, thereby assuring him that he was favoured above all the rest—her chosen knight and special *protégé*.

“A very great friend of ours,” Millicent

described him to those of her own sex, from whom nominally she had no secret. Not that she was always so kind to him as to render apology necessary to others. Millicent, it must be confessed, was capricious. At times Alured's disconsolate discontented face roused other sentiments than pity, and then she snubbed and scolded him so unmercifully, that Lady Moynehan,—forced to take his part,—began to be reassured and confident that nothing tender had passed between them. But this pettishness came from that very love which she had given Alured. It vexed Millicent to find that he was unable to hold his own; that other men not nearly so worthy, distanced him easily in the race of *savoir faire*.

It was the same when the Moynehan carriage pulled up at the usual corner in the Park. The same difficulties, the same battle to be fought, the same crowd to jostle him, the same men to talk him down. There, as at Carlton Gardens, one hated form in particular hovered round. Pierpoint was always in attendance; a standing dish at every afternoon tea, riding in the Park always, and certain to mount guard over the

carriage when it was drawn up by Apsley House or elsewhere.

Alured may have had cause to congratulate himself at his opportunities at King's Lilies, and the success they brought him. But in London he was decidedly at a disadvantage. The race was too unequal. How was he to hold as his own, the ground he had once "walked over," when here in London he only met with Millicent at rare and fortunate intervals! His rivals, Pierpoint and the rest, could see her and speak to her when they pleased. The great world of London opened its doors to them and to her alike. But who was Alured Frere that he should hope to gain admission? It is no easy task for any man, gentleman though he be, but one of the thousands below the upper ten, to win his way into the charmed circle of the "best society," such as was Lady Moynehan's. To clear the social turnpike needs birth, colossal fortune, or a great name gained in war, literature, or art; though chance does it sometimes too—the chance of a first opening, for the first step is all that counts. The great world is not exclusive; it has not time, nor will it take

the trouble. Where one leads, others follow, not unlike sheep. The *entrée* to one house is the passport to a dozen others. There are social adventurers, who being neither rich, clever, nor of patrician descent, pass within the hallowed precincts thus, while hundreds of others, better born and better bred, with larger gifts, natural and attained, are left out in the cold. Some unseen power seems to "force" such men, as a conjuror forces the knave of clubs upon an unsuspecting spectator.

Alured had no one to force him upon the people of fashion. Lady Moynehan might have done so years before when she herself was a leader in the world, and fascinated by the handsome boy. Now, though at home in the society she once led, there was no throne vacant for her; and though there was much of the old liking for Alured left, she no longer petted him as of old. He had grown too big, for one thing. Perhaps the possession of a son of her own, heir to an old title and a great estate, was a better outlet for her fondness. And Lady Moynehan was unmistakably changed since Alured had first known her. Visibly aged,

more motherlike and staid, devoted to her boy. It seemed, too, as if she was more at ease, and happy in her mind. Perhaps, as Alured thought, the weight of an old grief was now removed; some secret, once sore and biting as an open wound, no longer pressed upon her, being forgotten, or needing concealment no more. Moreover, in all Alured's visits to King's Lilies, with endless chances of private converse, Lady Moynehan had never once referred to the events of the first night's visit to Moynehan Castle.

Lady Moynehan was glad to see Alured about the house, and welcomed him always. There was a place for him at lunch, she said, whenever he chose to go, and he was never left out when they gave a dance at Carlton Gardens. But this much done, she was satisfied; nor would she ever have been disposed wittingly to give Alured opportunities for prosecuting a suit,—which she would have considered quite undesirable—with Millicent. So the only person who might have helped him did not, and often his visits to town proved only a mockery and a snare.

At first he was lost—utterly lost—in London. Amidst the crowd of carriages in Piccadilly, or in the thick of the loungers along the Row, he was like a drop in the ocean; a strange drop of some foreign liquid owning no kinship with the millions around. He seemed to have nothing in common with all these people, and to be as outlandish as a Chinaman. He hardly knew his way about the streets, till constant watching near Carlton Gardens taught him the route the great yellow carriage generally followed, and that was enough for him. When he got to town of an afternoon his first visit was to the house. “M’ lady is hout,” says Calves, “and Miss Sintillier is hout. Hi am not aweer which weay they went. They went in the kerridge.” But Alured knows pretty well their line of country. From their house to Bond Street and Regent Street, and from shopping to the Park. He posts up Waterloo Place, seeking eagerly to make out the familiar liveries, gains the top of Regent Street, comes into Bond Street, and so down to Piccadilly. The stream is setting towards the Park. He faces alone the dandy’s walk, running the gaunt-

let, as it were, of the swells hanging on to the railings, and the swells seated in rows upon the wire-chairs next the flower-beds. A little while ago he would have died sooner than walk that walk all alone. Now love gave him a courage that Bloxam's arm could not afford ; Bloxam, whose delight it was to swagger down the Row, attracting every eye by the gorgeousness of his attire. The drive is crammed with carriages moving at a foot's pace, round and round in a circle. Presently there is a flutter, a mounted policeman rides down to clear the way. It is the princess. Where is Alured's princess ? With a heavy heart he sees that the evening is drawing in ; the throng visibly thins ; they are not coming he thinks, and turns to leave the Park, like his betters.

Why, there is the carriage ! drawn up in a new place ; where it has been, you foolish boy, for the last hour. But there is such a crowd round the carriage, he seems to have as much chance to have a word as A 22, whose beat is close by. But Millicent has seen him, and nodded a short recognition. He is content to wait till the last, with such patient endurance,

that it moved Millicent's heart more than his anger could have done. A few soft words of encouragement are all that he needs.

"I never can get to speak to you now," he says, rather plaintively.

"It's not my fault." Millicent drops her voice, and speaks with tender softness. "I seem to be in a continual bustle. Will you come and lunch to-morrow?"

Alured ought to go back by the midnight train. But who would hesitate? He would telegraph to the major. Gaynor was away; the major would not mind.

"If I come to lunch, I shall meet half-a-dozen men who will talk me down. I shan't be able to get in a word edgewise."

"Why do you let them talk you down? I am surprised at you,—I am indeed! I used to think you were brave enough for anything."

"What shall I do to prove my courage? Knock down that peeler, or climb the duke's statue and have his hat?"

"You're more like yourself when you talk like that, Alured."

"It's because I'm talking to you," said the

poor boy; the gladness of these few short minutes flashing through his eyes, and brightening his cheeks with colour.

"Come, my dear." It was Lady Moynehan's voice. She had been deeply engaged with some one at the other side of the carriage. "It's getting late. Who's that you're talking to? Mr. Frere! You never come to see us now."

Alured thought she might have made bezique packs for all time out of his cards.

"I want him to come to lunch to-morrow," said Millicent.

"Yes, do. Mind you do; Algy is continually asking for you. But we really must be going. You know, Millicent, we are to dine at the Austrian ambassador's."

Millicent laughed at the face which Alured made, and added—

"Yes, I know; and after that to an 'at home' at Lady Pamberstone's, then to that ball at Willis's Rooms. Are you going to either, Mr. Frere?"

In public it was still Mr. Frere.

"I? Am I going to have tea with the

Lord Mayor, or take the Tycoon of Japan to the opera? about as likely. But I shall see you at lunch at least."

"If you're good you can come and walk with us in the Park; we shall be here by twelve."

"Millicent, if you want to have your hair dressed to-night——"

"All right, auntie."

"Good-bye, Mr. Frere."

"Good-bye, good-bye." Ten minutes' talk, and his audience was ended. For this he had travelled a hundred miles, and squandered half a dozen pounds. But for this, or less—for a glimpse of her winsome face, to hear one note of her sweet voice—he was ready to give his right arm. The carriage was barely out of sight before he began to consider whether it was not possible for him to see her again that night. She had told him where they would be. Could he go unasked to the Prime Minister's, or put in an appearance at the ball in Willis's Rooms? Even this he would have dared, but he dreaded the disgrace of detection under the eyes of his beloved. But he might watch for her unquestioned, save by a prying curious

policeman, at the door of the Austrian ambassador's, or stare into each carriage with its cargo of tulle bound to Oxbridge House. He had the key of the street in common with the roughs, and time was no object. But where did the Austrian ambassador live, and which was Oxbridge House, and who was Willis who kept rooms for the balls of the great? Alured was almost ashamed to ask such questions. It confessed that he knew so little of London. Ignorance is often thus the parent of ignorance. The less one knows the more one shrinks from enlightenment. Any street cad could have taught Alured his lesson in half a minute, or a cab would have dropped him at the very doors. He might have applied to the nearest sitting magistrate for the advice of the court, or have inquired at the General Post-Office, or chased the Moynehan carriage from point to point in a fast hansom. But he did none of these things; yet was he able to tell Millicent next day,—

“I saw you at Albert Gate, last night.”

“Albert Gate? why you weren't at the Exponyi's?”

"I was—at the door."

They were walking in the Row; old Gorgious was in front with Lady Moynehan. Millicent stopped dead short, to look Alured hard in the face.

"Well, of all——"

"And I was at Oxbridge House, at least opposite to it, and at Willis's, in the street, and I saw you."

"You're like a child playing a game of 'I spy.' Do you generally spend your evenings in London in dogging your friends from house to house?"

"If I want to see them very much."

"Then I wish you wouldn't do it, Alured. It gives me an uncomfortable sort of feeling, as if I had two shadows. I don't like being watched."

"Do you like the Soldaten Lieder Waltzes? That's what they were playing when I was standing in the wet outside Willis's Rooms. And who were you dancing with?"

"I shall not tell you. You are like a father confessor. Captain Pierpoint, probably."

She liked to tease him.

“It’s *toujours* Pierpoint.”

“That’s what he says of you.”

“I wish I might never see him again.”

“Then you won’t come to us at King’s Lilies for Goodcot race week?”

“You haven’t asked me.”

“What would be the good of asking you to meet Captain Pierpoint?”

“That certainly destroys the charm. Still, if you press me very much——”

Frere was ready to go down on his knees to thank her for the invitation. To be in the same house with her again, and for a week!

“I shan’t press. You can please yourself. Come or not.”

“Who else is to be there, besides Dr. Fell?”

“Dr. Fell?”

“He’s Dr. Fell to me,—Pierpoint, I mean,—only I know the reason why I hate him well enough.”

“We won’t discuss that. Nor shall you make conditions. Yes or no,—come or not; but an answer you must give on the spot.”

“Then I most distinctly—accept.”

“I knew you would. How jolly it will be.

Oh, Alured, if it could always be all right! When shall we be able to acknowledge all?"

"It's too awful to think of."

"At any rate I shall have no detective at my heels, for one week," said Millicent, laughing.

"What a comfort."

"I shall have my cold grey eye upon you, Millicent, all the same."

"So much the better. I don't mind your eyes. On the contrary——"

Further billing and cooing was put an end to by Lady Moynehan coming back to them. Then they drove back to Carlton Gardens, a merry party.

CHAPTER VI.

GOODCOT RACES.

“ O bitterness of things too sweet !
O broken singing of the dove !
Love’s wings are over fleet,
And like the panther’s feet,—
The feet of love.”

SWINBURNE.

BEFORE lunch was half over, Pierpoint was announced. The two men scowled at each other a faint sort of greeting, and doubtless the same thought crossed both their minds. “Here again ; he’s always here !” It was this last drop that overflowed the bucket of Pierpoint’s forbearance. He sought out Gaynor, meaning to have a quiet talk with him, and late one night they met at “Spratt’s.” The colonel always showed himself where the best men went, and it was quite the proper thing to go into Spratt’s for a game of billiards, or a light supper, after other evening entertainments.

“Missed you lately,” said Pierpoint. They

had come to be pretty friendly, he and Gaynor.

"Out of town?"

"Business in the north. But I have been away barely a month. Nuisance, too, just at this time of the year."

"How's the regiment?"

"Pretty fit, I daresay. Haven't seen much of it lately."

"That young adjutant of yours on leave?"

"No; hang him. He's too fond of leave. He's got to look after the shop."

"H'm, you must have a branch business in town then, for he's always in London. Never misses a day hardly."

"You don't mean that," cried Gaynor anxiously. "That's the way with them: the moment your back is turned, up go their heels."

"Very much in town, I may say."

"And at Carlton Gardens I presume?"

"Continually."

"In your way there?"

"Well I won't say so much as that, but I think it's a pity he does not stick to his work more. You see I knew his father; we were in the same regiment——"

“And you take an interest in the son. Oh, of course ; I see, I see.”

And Gaynor stroked his chin, as he did when he was amused.

Two days later the colonel rejoined. As usual after a long absence, he had a fit of zeal ; he was as bristly as a new broom. To Frere he was especially ungracious. He found fault with everything. The men were slack—devilish slack. They couldn't stand up to their arms. They wanted setting up ; they must carry back those butts of their rifles more, and alter the hang of their knapsacks. The books and papers in the regimental office were in a disgraceful state. The officers half mutinous, and idle—gad ! idle was no name for them.

“I'm very much dissatisfied, Mr. Frere,” said the colonel, visiting the sins of the regiment upon the adjutant. “I did hope that in the short interval of my absence matters might be kept straight.”

Alured could hardly account for the alteration in Gaynor's demeanour towards him. But since Lady Moynehan had gone to town she had treated the colonel rather coolly ; this, with the

desire to please Pierpoint, led him to take revenge upon Alured Frere.

"But what can you expect," Gaynor went on, appealing as it were to himself, "what can you expect with an adjutant who neglects his work?"

This was too much for Alured.

"I've done my work well enough for several years, sir; and if you are not satisfied with me now——"

"You have the remedy in your own hands," he would have said. But the colonel interrupted him.

"You go too much to town, Mr. Frere. Don't attempt to explain. I know you have been there of late five days out of the seven. I am astonished that Major Davidson can have permitted it."

"Every other officer gets leave," growled Frere.

"They're not all adjutants."

"They're not all slaves," Alured muttered, *sotto voce*.

"I wish you to understand once and for all, Mr. Frere, that my adjutant must stay at home

more. I've been through the mill myself; now I am at the top of the tree, I mean to get some of the fruit. One of us must stop here: I go away when I choose; you can't."

"Well, sir——"

"No excuses. This must not occur again. I know you mean well; but London is—in fact is, London."

"I was about to say, sir, that I must resign the adjutantcy."

Gaynor was quite unprepared for this; and knowing full well the value of a good subordinate, was loth to lose Alured as adjutant.

"Oh, come, come," he said; "you'll think better of it. I cannot allow you to injure yourself in a fit of temper. You mustn't take what I have said amiss."

"My mind is quite made up, sir."

"Well then I won't bandy words with you. But it's devilish inconvenient. I need hardly tell you that I shall expect you to carry on the duties until I find a successor."

Gaynor was now angry, but what did Alured care? He had shown himself independent, and was already panting for his expected free-

dom. Before long another officer was selected to fill his place, and by the time Goodcot came, Alured found no difficulty in getting away to King's Lilies.

Every house of any pretensions within a dozen miles was always filled for Goodcot Races. The whole fashionable world migrated thither for the week. Those who owned places filled them, or let them at rents which would have bought a terrace in the outskirts of a country town. As Millicent was now fairly out, it behoved Lady Moynehan to do as her neighbours did, and put herself to endless discomfort by cramming her house from garret to cellar, with as many nice people as she could get in the general scramble for guests. King's Lilies was not very big, but there was room in it for a dozen, male and female, duly assorted,—with the locust-like swarm of retainers that follow in the train of the great. It was Millicent's party, and she had chosen the guests. The Duchess of Greyfriars headed the list, stout and good humoured as usual, as keen and excited at the prospects of a week's fun as any colt. Then there were her two daughters and Mrs.

Fazakerly ; the latter a young widow, reputed enormously rich, and very thick with Pierpoint. It was on his account that Millicent had asked her, to divert his attention from herself probably. Mrs. Fazakerly was a conceited little woman, who fancied she was very clever. She liked to say sharp things. Her way was to watch her chance, and then during a lull in the conversation she began in a low slow voice, with downcast eyes, advancing some new view, generally *mal-à-propos* and certainly valueless. And she was fond of telling every one his business. Her grandmother might have learnt to suck eggs from her, for she prided herself upon knowing everything. After Mrs. Fazakerly came the two Miss Gore Langtons, pretty, quiet girls, but not specially interesting, or in any way connected with this story. Then for men : Pierpoint of course. Lady Moynehan had insisted upon his being asked, as a relative, and to do the honours to the other men. Millicent had objected, for she had set her heart upon having Alured at King's Lilies, and the two would never agree. As a compromise Mrs. Fazakerly was invited for Pierpoint's especial

benefit. As to Alured, Millicent was forced to be diplomatic lest Lady Moynehan should guess his presence was too eagerly desired. The child, growing double-faced with the long concealment of her love, had approached the subject very warily. Descanting first upon the scarcity of nice men,—men not fine, or bad tempered, or stupid,—she asked, quite innocently of course, whom Lady Moynehan would recommend. After running through a list as long as Homer's catalogue of the ships, Alured's name was mentioned. "Oh, he would never do at all," said Millicent. "He would be lost among all those people, he was shy and unaccustomed to such parties, and would only be unhappy."

"I thought you might have liked to have had him here," replied Lady Moynehan, quite unconsciously. "But of course you can do as you please. It's your party."

Next Pug Walthamstowe was suggested, and Glentilt, and Tregooze, and Lord This, and Lord That. Millicent harking back continually to her reasons for objecting to Mr. Frere. In the end, she pretended to give way, declaring that our hero would do as well as most of the others.

Her point gained, the rest followed easily. Pug Walthamstowe, of the Prancer's, was asked, and with him a couple of his brother-officers. Pug's drag was requisitioned, as it was thought advisable to turn out in style from King's Lilies. These soldiers were asked, because Millicent thought Alured would be more at home with men of his own cloth, ignorant that there was little in common between the gay horse soldier and a poor infantry sub. One or two little swells, just fledged, Lord Hooghly, for instance, full of the importance which had descended to them from their ancestors, were included in the party as a matter of course. Of such men, Lady Moynehan numbered dozens among her acquaintance, and even she was not blind to their qualifications as possible suitors for Millicent's hand.

On the afternoon before the first day's racing, they all arrived. Alured went down from London with the rest. Everybody bound to Goodcot seemed to be travelling by the same train from the same station. The baggage lying about, might have belonged to a *corps d'armée* in retreat; and the crowd of servants,

disconsolate and woe-begone, in charge thereof, a *levée en masse*,—or a shattered rear-guard making head hopelessly against a victorious host of railway officials. Every seat in the train was taken, and at every station on the line, near Goodcot, conveyances in dozens awaited the disembarkation of passengers. Lady Moynehan's carriage was at Cheswell station, waiting for the duchess and the other ladies, while Pug Walthamstowe's man met them too, with cabs for the rest of the party. Alured did not like to thrust himself forward, and could get nothing to take him over to King's Lilies. It was near six, the house a mile or more distant, dinner at eight. How was he to travel? His portmanteau was too heavy to carry, but he borrowed a porter's truck. Wheeling this in front of him, with as much *sang froid* as he could assume, he reached King's Lilies in time to dress for dinner. He was the last, except Pierpoint. The ladies had gone to dress, and the men were on the lawn, sprawling at full length, and quite disinclined to greet him—even if they had known him.

Alured went to his room, he had the same

always, and made his bow in the drawing-room where all were assembled.

“The duchess you know,” Lady Moynehan said to him, kindly, “and Lady Agatha and Lady Adeline. This is Mrs. Fazakerly, Miss Gore Langton—Mr. Frere.”

Then dinner was announced, and as they sat down, Pierpoint put in his head at the door.

“I *am* sorry. Missed my train. Pray don’t wait dinner. Oh, yes,” in answer to Millicent, “I know my way to my room, thank you. Blue bedroom, second floor back, up two flight of stairs. Thank you; my death will be at your door. I always forget about those stairs; but if I don’t break my neck, I’ll be down before you’ve done your soup.” And he went off with his usual air of “at-homeishness,” which Alured so thoroughly resented.

Mrs. Fazakerly waved her hand after him, and asked Alured, who had taken her in to dinner, whether he did not think Captain Pierpoint quite too charming.

“He came late on purpose,” she said, “just to make an impression, you know. He does it so well.”

"The impression?"

"Yes,"—slowly, and with a lisp. Then after a pause, "Do you know Lord Hepden? No? They say he's cut his throat. Oh, no, I *can't* tell you why. It's quite too dreadful. And Charlie Hogarth's marriage is a *fait accompli*. *Such* a mistake!"

Alured wanted very much to ask why, but Pug Walthamstowe, who was rather "off-hand," cried out across the table, that he wished he could make such a mistake as to get a wife with a half a million of money.

"Has she got so much?" asked Lady Moynehan.

"No, indeed," replied Mrs. Fazakerly, for the table. She knew all about it of course. "Old Flyblow's worth ten times as much, perhaps, but he won't give her more than a hundred thousand down. Besides the debts, of course. Charlie wouldn't promise, till they put him quite straight in the world. I know it for a fact."

"Seen the settlements, no doubt," said Pug, in a low voice, to Lady Agatha. "I wish I had that woman's advantages."

“You could not make more of them than she does.”

“How did you get over here from the station?” asked Millicent, who was sitting close by, and was dying to hear Alured’s voice.

“I wheeled myself over on a porter’s truck.”

Mrs. Fazakerly opened her eyes.

“That’s what I did at La Encina, when we were travelling in Spain. Do you remember, girls?”

“Mamma beat a Spanish railway-man over the head with her white umbrella.”

“For which she was taken to the police-station, by the civil guards,” added Lady Adeline.

“And got a fortnight’s bread and water next day, from the judge of the primera instancia, as they call the sitting magistrate.”

“What stories you girls tell!” said the duchess, nearly choking. She always laughed the most when the joke was against herself.

“I thought that in Spain foreigners came under the military tribunals?” said little Lord Hooghly, who was in training for a legislator—a small pale youth, with dead white complexion, hair long and brushed back; his moustache, a

few colourless wisps, like unbleached straw. All shirt-front and white cuffs and jewellery: chain like the cable of a seventy-four, studs as big as cheese-plates. But for his little pumps and black silk stockings, he would have had bells on his toes, as he had rings encircling his fingers, thick as hoops on a beer-barrel. "When I was with my yacht at Gibraltar, I remember a case of trespass, where an English sailor had ridden over a donkey and killed it. It was on Spanish soil, and he was tried by court-martial. They gave him seven years in chains at Ceuta."

"What does Puffendorf say on the subject?" asked the duchess, gravely.

"I have not consulted him; but if you wish——"

Pierpoint came in at this moment, and the question of international law was postponed.

He took his seat quite naturally in the vacant place by Millicent, but after the first few words, she preferred talking across to Alured.

"How about the pictures, Mr. Frere?" she asked.

"Do you paint?" said Mrs. Fazakerly, choosing to keep his conversation to herself.

"A little," Alured replied.

"And are your pictures hung? At the Academy I mean and the other galleries. It's all a question of luck. The foot-rule does it."

Alured did not understand.

"Yes; it's the measure. If your frames fit into the vacant places they'll take your pictures. Mr. Rivington, the well-known artist, told me so. Do you know him?"

"Only by name," which was all that Mrs. Fazakerly did.

"He *is* so clever and so industrious. He spares no pains, makes his models run up and down his studio, just to catch the proper lines of drapery in motion—a stroke a day."

"Has anybody read Dewint's new novel?" asked the duchess.

Mrs. Fazakerly condemned it at once. "It's not worth reading."

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Lord Hooghly. "He's a cousin of mine."

"Yes; and it's so badly reviewed, you know," said Mrs. Fazakerly to Alured, whom she looked

upon as a pupil to be properly instructed ; " it all depends upon the reviewing. And the libraries, —the libraries do just as they please. Have you written much ?"

Alured laughed, and said he had.

" Novels ? history ? poetry ? what ?"

" No ; chiefly letters to my mother, or the secretary at war."

Even Mrs. Fazakerly saw the smile which ran round the table, and decided at once that she did not like Mr. Frere.

But now the ladies got up, and Alured was left to the men. They nearly choked him with their curious jargon ; he cared neither for Pierpoint's scandal nor the others' horse talk. Performance, pedigree, and the state of the odds, on one side ; on the other he heard how this man was going to marry that woman, like an idiot, and that another was blind to what went on in his own house. " It would be a bad meeting for the gentlemen," some one said. Another declared that the acrobats would have a poor chance. " The acrobats ?" " Yes, the tumblers ; the horses that won't hold up. The ground's so hard." Two of the Prancers became much

excited about six-pound saddles and horse clothing. Alured tried hard to look interested, but found himself bored to death, and was already half asleep, when Pug Walthamstowe, like a good-natured little man, took pity on him, and discussed sherry with him, the next day's sport, and the last Grand Military, points on which Alured was extremely hazy, nevertheless. He was happier when they went into the drawing-room, and was allowed to turn over Millicent's music, or took a card at the whist table with the two dowagers and Lord Hooghly. His reward came at last, when the object of his affections squeezed his hand, as she took the lighted bedroom candle from him, and they separated for the night.

CHAPTER VII.

A CLIMAX.

“It is not only money, but sometimes vain-glory, pride, ambition, do as much harm as covetousness itself in another extreme. If a yeoman have a sole daughter, he must overmatch her, above her birth and calling, to a gentleman, forsooth, because of her great portion,—too good for one of her own rank, as he supposeth; a gentleman’s daughter and heir must be married to a knight baronet’s eldest son at least; and a knight’s only daughter to a baron himself, or an earl, and so upwards,—her great dower deserves it.”

BURTON: *Anatomy of Melancholy.*

WHAT a week it was!

The same duty had to be done daily, and yet there was variety in its execution. Breakfast over, with its inevitable sweepstakes and discussion of the day’s racing, croquet followed, or walks to the river’s bank, or music in the little boudoir, while the men lazily clicked the balls about till midday, when it was time to drive to the course. This was the great event of the morning, and it was wonderful how smart they all looked; the men in white waistcoats, varnished boots, and much *pomade hon-*

groise ; the ladies a perfect band of beauties, with Millicent at their head, appearing each day in newer and more splendid apparel, till it seemed as if millinery could do no more. Oh, blessed fecundity of invention which can so organise and cut out material so that no two people shall seem to dress alike ! Of course in Alured's eyes Millicent had far the best of it. She was such a little swell, as he told her ; blue, faint pink, tender maize, or pale sea-green, all colours suited her ; and, as usual, her costume gained in picturesqueness by its originality. She sought, too, in innocent coquetry to ensure success by neatness and perfection in all details of gloves or bonnets. Nor was she above such a pretty trick as to hide her head one day in a long veil of feathery gauze, which might have been a bridal wreath, or a fleecy cloud, through which her eyes shone bright and sparkling, like twin planets at midnight. She told Alured she dressed for him ; and it was no doubt a pleasure simply to see her, but here his satisfaction ended. Though they knew that they now belonged to each other, they seldom got a quiet word together. She was more than half hostess,

and had the care of the household and the other young ladies upon her shoulders. Indeed she discouraged his attentions; and Millicent had it her own way of course. Girls in the first blush of an engagement always have it their own way. If he expostulated, she replied, with a wilful toss of the head, that it must be so for the present. "You would not have us announced as an engaged couple? Are you ready to face Aunt Moynehan? and before all those people who would watch our sayings and doings all day long?" So he had to content himself with such smuggled fondlings as his young lady deigned to vouchsafe to him. An affectionate, though perhaps mute, good-night, or a sweet glance and a few tender words in the morning when they found themselves the first, alone in the breakfast-room. They arranged to meet thus before the urn, or in the garden early. It was not always that they succeeded, but when they did there was no end to what they had to say. Alured was not very jealous now, and laughed with Millicent in private at the tender speeches which Pierpoint or some other fond youth presumed at times to utter.

If they were lucky, the scene of a morning was something such as this :—

Half-past eight, no more. The house not as yet entirely awake, and still very quiet, except when an occasional frantic bell breaks the silence; but there is no one about but a hurried maid or two, flitting past with cans of hot water. All the best rooms of the house open upon a gallery that surrounds three sides of the hall. It is such a light pleasant morning that the hall doors are thrown open, and through them the sunlight chequers the marble floor, while from outside comes the chirping chorus of the birds. Stay, some one's up already; there is one early riser in the house, who is standing in the portico, ostensibly reading, but with both ears laid back as keen as a hare in its form, for a certain sound—the sound of a dress's rustle; and here it is. A starched, white *piqué* dress, that crackles almost against the balustrades, announcing the near approach of its wearer. She has just come out of her room, a clean, healthy English maiden, fresh from her morning toilette; as dainty and as sweet as a nosegay of spring

flowers; a broad blue band, as deep as a southern sky, encircles her waist; great blue bows are sprinkled among the white folds of her dress. The rosettes in her shoes, and the ribbons in her dark hair are the same. All unconsciously, as it would seem, she trips down slowly, stair by stair, humming a few merry notes, as a bird might carol out its heart with gladness, because the sun above is bright and the earth below beautiful. By accident of course she strays within the portico and starts, a well feigned start, at the shadow that falls across the pavement.

"How odd! Who expected to see you so early," she remarks.

"Still more strange that you should be up."

Then both laugh, as if at some excellent joke.

"No, Alured; I can't have you touch me."

"Stuff! sit down here."

"People are coming; I must go and make the tea."

And then for that day, the interview was ended. His chances of speaking to her alone again were almost nil. On the course, whether seated on the box of their break, or upon the

lawn of the grand stand, Millicent was no longer his private property. Dozens of men and women claimed a share in her, and she was off and out of sight time after time, without his being in the least able to help himself. Then he wandered about dejectedly among the crowd, and sought a poor solace in the strange scene.

Ethiopians, gipsies, prize-fighters in full dress, ready for the fray, riff-raff of all sorts. The fire king was there in all his glory, devouring nauseous flames; Mr. Treacle's private band too, the same that attended the lawn parties and private assemblies of the aristocracy, Treacle himself at its head, with breast adorned with sham medals, and the airs of a Costa. After them ranked the man who broke stones with his fist, the Italian serenader, the performing "horse of sensibility," the street bands with the street catch of the year, "Slap Bang," "Nancy," "Champagne Charlie," or some other dreary doggrel in fashion for the time. A Babel of sounds: and high above all the din, A 1 crying, "Off the course, off the course." Clouds of dust; for dust was the

great feature of this year's Goodcot. It was in the air, keeping back the daylight, and quenching the sun's rays, forming a haze like a London fog across the distant horizon, sweeping along the temporary roads that led to the course in terrible whirlwinds; or lying, when the wind dropped, so thick and deep that carriage wheels moved silently like sleigh runners over new fallen snow. Frere wandered about objectless, elbowing his way through the crowd backwards and forwards, but returning with the greatest regularity to the point where he had last seen Millicent. If he found her, and she was disengaged, he would snatch a word or two before the next new friend came up to claim acquaintance, then disappear, miserable, to thread his way through the multitude once more. This time to stare at the drags a dozen deep round the front of the Jockey Club enclosure, and envy Pug Walthamstowe, not because he owned the neatest turn-out on the course, but because it had been settled that he was to have Millicent beside him on the box that afternoon, when driving back to King's Lilies. Walking

thus, wretched amidst the exuberant gaiety of the noisy crowd, like a death's head at a feast, he suddenly heard his name.

"Boy Frere ! It's the Boy, or I'm a Dutchman."

Rollicking, roaring Starkie with his great deep voice, mellowed somewhat by the champagne cup, swings himself down from the top of his drag.

"Well, I *am* glad to see you, boy ! How are they all at home ? Your mother,—by George, I take off my hat when I speak of your mother. She's too good for us down here. I wish I had a mother to look after me." There was something ludicrous in the notion of Starkie nursed and watched over by a tender parent, but he was speaking in sober earnest. Starkie had a deep respect for Mrs. Frere, dating from the days when the two had nursed young Alured.

"But what is the matter, Boy Frere ?" went on Starkie. "You look as peaky as a peafowl with the pip. Has any one left you a fortune ? That's about the most cursed ill-luck a man can have. I never was in debt till I

came into my property, and I was on speaking terms with *some* of my relations, till they tried to swindle me out of my own father's money. Or are you going to be married? Not married? Then you want to be, and can't, that's it! Of course, at your age it's all spoons. Who's the lucky girl who won't have you?"

Frere was by no means disposed to admit Starkie into his confidence, but he could not avoid a smile.

"You won't tell me? Never mind, Boy Frere; I shall know by-and-by. Work it, that's all, and I'll wish you joy. I shall, from the bottom of my soul;" and then a change came over his haggard, deep furrowed face, like the quiet of an evening calm, falling upon waves troubled and tempest-torn; a strange look, almost of tenderness, illumined for a moment his bloodshot, watery eye. "I do. I'd give all I'm worth now, to have married at your age. It might have kept me straight." Was that a sigh? Yes; the memory of his ill-spent life pressed him sore just then; he was thinking how, with self at the helm, and

vice filling all his sails, he had gone straight upon the rocks, and was wrecked already.

Starkie soon recovered, however.

“Why look miserable, boy? Go in and win. Marry if you can, man. I tell you, you should go down on your knees, and thank God for the chance,—here, now, on this course. But they’d take you for a lunatic. Cheer up, boy.

‘Why soldiers, why, should we be melancholy,
Whose business ’tis to die?’

“She’s unkind perhaps?

‘Phillis is my only joy,
Sometimes kind and sometimes coy.’

“And she won’t accept your vows?

‘If of herself she will not love,
Nothing can make her,—
The devil take her.’”

It might have been the champagne cup which thus unloosened Starkie’s tongue; more probably it was the reaction from an exhibition of sentiment he seldom permitted himself.

“But go in and win. She’s sure to give way.

It's her people perhaps—they always object at first,—unless you are some idiot peer, or swindling Cræsus. Can I help you in any way?" and Starkie chuckled at the notion of browbeating a parent whose fault was overmuch care for a child's happiness.

Alured did not reply at once.

"Who is it?" Starkie went on. "Won't you tell me? Who is her furious father?"

"There's no father or mother. It's an aunt—Lady Moynehan. Don't you remember her in Ireland?"

"What! that big woman? Phew," whistled Starkie; and the news steadied him in an instant.

"Does she object to the match? Do you really want help?"

"I've not had the pluck to ask her yet."

"Mention my name when you do so. I'm not joking. And if that don't do, ask her ladyship if she ever heard of Noke Surman. That'll be a clincher."

"Come and say so yourself. They're all here, and there's lunch at the break. Lady Moynehan will be delighted to see you."

“I’m not so sure of that. But where are they? I’ll go. It might do you some good.”

The great race of the meeting was just due, and the break was full. Gaynor having come to pay his respects, was introduced to the duchess; and happy Mrs. Fazakerly, fathoms deep with Lord Hooghly, because, eager for facts and information, he believed all she told him, was busy with her lunch and a discussion on mediæval torpedoes, in which Lord Hooghly took much interest. Tredcroft had come down for the cup day, just to see Lady Adeline. Pierpoint was at the break too, scowling at Mrs. Fazakerly, and unemployed. What wonder then that he caught and interpreted the tell-tale glance between Millicent and Alured, the moment her friend appeared! He threatened her later in the day with instant exposure to Lady Moynehan, but Millicent bravely bade him mind his own business, and declared that if he interfered she would never speak to him again.

When Starkie came to the carriage, and lifted his hat, Lady Moynehan started.

“I’m afraid it’s so many years since I had the honour—” said he in his deep voice.

“Oh yes; I remember you,” replied Lady Moynehan quickly; but she was very pale, and her manner was rather nervous.

“Changes work so rapidly. But my young friend Frere told me you were here, and I thought——”

“Oh, it is to Mr. Frere then that I am indebted for this renewal of an old, very old, acquaintanceship? Thank you, Mr. Frere.” But she did not seem frantically grateful to Alured.

Then Gaynor broke in, wishing to help in the conversation, which was evidently constrained.

“I remember you too, doctor, on the West Coast of Africa, eh? and in India. Hot in India, wasn't it?”

How Starkie hated to be addressed as “doctor,” simply! He was a surgeon, not a doctor he used to say; and the title did not belong to him. Besides as he did not practise now, and had left the army, there was no reason why his profession should be trumpeted to all the world.

“When you cheated the land crabs, eh,

Gaynor? You were not fond of epidemics, I must allow. How you hooked it that time the yellow Jack broke out! And do you recollect in the cholera at Dumdum, when the officers had to act as hospital orderlies, how you——”

A very impudent off-hand way of speaking to him, by George! the colonel of a regiment, thought Gaynor. But it served him right for being so familiar with Starkie.

“Won’t you have some lunch?” put in Lady Moynehan.

“Thank you, no; I must go over to the stand. I’d like to lay against the favourite. Doing anything, Gaynor? Bet you 50 to 10 against Flybynight. No? Good-day, Lady Moynehan,” and Starkie, bowing, strode away.

Soon after this scene, the King’s Lilies party left the course. They went back in driblets. The duchess and Lady Moynehan with some of the ladies, escorted by Pierpoint, in the carriage, the rest in Pug Walthamstowe’s drag, Mrs. Fazakerly doing propriety. Alured would have gone with this lot, but talking to Starkie at the last moment, he had missed them. Millicent, too, was so absorbed in the

delight of her box-seat, that for the moment she forgot her friend, and Alured found himself compelled to walk back to King's Lilies, a couple of miles—just what suited him. He was able to dream of Millicent the whole dusty distance.

There was a crowd not far from the gate. Tramps by dozens, and one or two country fellows who were helping servants in livery to get a vehicle out of the ditch.

It was Pug Walthamstowe's drag.

At the same instant, a groom mounted from King's Lilies passed through the lodge gates at a hand gallop.

Alured's heart was in his mouth, and with a sickening feeling of anxiety creeping over him, he joined himself to the group of men, who a little on one side, were listening to Pug's description of the accident.

"By George, I never saw anything like her in all my life," Walthamstowe was saying.

"The pluckiest girl I ever met—no, plucky is no name for it!"

"Well, but how was it?"

"She insisted upon taking the ribbons.

‘Have you ever driven a four-in-hand before?’ I said. ‘Not I.’ But like an idiot I let her have the reins, and showed her how to hold them. The first thing she did was to touch up the leaders, and in another minute they were fairly running away with her, down the big hill—as fast as they could lay legs to the ground. Then she turned to me, and said coolly, ‘I can’t hold them a bit. They’re *quite* out of hand.’ Hold them! I should think not. I did not know what to say to her, but I began to get in a funk. ‘We shall come to grief,’ I said between my teeth. ‘Shall we? what fun!’ ‘Very poor fun for Mrs. Fazakerly behind and others, if we break their necks as well as our own.’ ‘Oh, it’ll be all right,’ there wasn’t a change in her voice, or a move in her eye. I took the reins; while she coolly shut up her parasol prepared for the worst. In another minute we were upset.”

“Who’s hurt?” asked Alured breathlessly.

“Miss St. Helier was taken up senseless; Mrs. Fazakerly——”

But Alured did not wait to listen further. He ran into the house like one demented.

Everything was in confusion ; servants running to and fro, a group of frightened ladies talking in whispers in the drawing-room, a bell rung every now and then as in apology for being obliged to speak.

There was an end, of course, to the Goodcot party at King's Lilies. Some of the guests were already gone; others followed, as fast as they could pack, but Alured waited, hesitating, wondering whether he might stay to hear the worst. By-and-by Lady Moynehan sent down to say she wished to speak to Mr. Frere. They met in the morning-room, and his first anxious query was cut short as if it fell from his lips.

"Yes ; Miss St. Helier is in great danger. She is delirious but she has spoken—and asked for you."

"For me ?"

"Mr. Frere, you have not behaved well to me."

"Oh, Lady Moynehan !"

"Captain Pierpoint put me on my guard only this afternoon ; but until Millicent spoke I was ignorant how far it had gone."

"I know I have behaved badly."

“ You have. I thought I might have trusted you. But I see how wrong I have been. How long has this understanding existed between you ? ”

Alured blushed and stammered out a few unintelligible words.

“ Don't you think, in common honesty, that I ought to have been informed—at once ? Even if you forgot to consult me first ; which, as her only guardian, I had a right to expect. ”

“ Lady Moynehan, do not be too hard on me. It came on us both so suddenly, and I did not dare to speak to you at first. Every day's delay has made confession more difficult. ”

“ Don't try to disarm my anger, Mr. Frere. You were very wrong—very wrong. ”

“ And have I no hope ? ”

“ How can you talk to me of hope, now, at this instant, when Millicent lies, for all we know, at the point of death ? It seems as if everything had combined to drive me distracted. ”

There was a long awkward silence, which Lady Moynehan broke at length, Alured hanging on the door as she spoke.

"Mr. Frere, will you promise me to give up Millicent?"

"I cannot. Indeed I cannot."

"Then you shall never have my consent—never. She is such a child too. She cannot know her own mind yet."

"Is that your only reason? I will wait—years—until you think she can be trusted to decide. But do not cut off all hope."

"I have other and more potent reasons. It is right that Millicent should marry more in her own rank of life."

And then Starkie's advice flashed across his mind. Might he not try the mysterious name, which Starkie promised would silence opposition? He began,—

"Lady Moynehan, I know that I am unworthy of Millicent, but at least I am a gentleman." Then purely at random he fired his shot. "I might add too, that, remembering Noke Surman——"

Had he guessed their effect, he would hardly have used these words.

Lady Moynehan turned white; and shook all over, saying presently in a strange husky

voice,—“What—what—what do you mean? Do you dare to threaten me?”

And gathering courage from her words, or because Alured's ill judged speech had given her a new insight into his character, she changed her line of argument.

“But no. Mr. Frere, I scorn to notice such threats. You mistake me much if you rely upon them for success; and I tell you again, most distinctly, that by my consent you shall never marry Millicent St. Helier. Wait too—more depends upon my consent than you are pleased to fancy. You are aware that my niece has some fortune? Of course! I need hardly have asked such a question; such disinterested suitors never omit to acquire good information.” It was Millicent herself who had told Alured, when they planned the future together; and she, foolish child, had asked what it would cost to buy him a colonelcy out of hand from the commander-in-chief. “But I must tell you, that under my late husband's will, Miss St. Helier holds her fortune on one condition—that she marries with my consent, if at all. Possibly you may not be so anxious to prosecute your

suit when you know that she shall never bring you a penny with her."

"I am grieved you should think so meanly of me, Lady Moynehan. Nothing but contempt could have inspired such bitter words. You force me to tell you that I will marry Millicent in spite of you."

"Mr. Frere! Do you dare say this to me?"

"I do; and for this reason: you have impugned my motives. It is only by winning her in your teeth, and penniless, that I can hope to prove the disinterestedness of my love. For my own credit I am bound to persevere."

"At your peril be it. She is only eighteen. You cannot marry her, without my consent, even if—if—" Lady Moynehan grew agitated; and the tears filled her eyes as she remembered that the darling for whose love they were disputing, might never live to thank her for her care,—“if she recovers,—until she is of age."

"I can wait longer than that. I could wait till doomsday, Lady Moynehan, if there were but a gleam of hope in the distance."

"Distinctly I tell you, Mr. Frere, that I give

you no iota of hope. I refuse most distinctly and unreservedly."

"I will take my dismissal from no lips but Millicent's own."

"Perhaps you would wish her to speak them now?"

"No, no; of course not. But I must and will see her again."

"You shall never see her again with my consent, or in my house."

There was again a pause, and the two were looking hard at each other. If Lady Moynehan had been a judge, she might have read a very firm, fixed resolution in Alured Frere's face. But she could not understand what she saw.

"And I must beg of you, Mr. Frere, to leave the house."

"Oh, Lady Moynehan, do not send me away now—not to-night; let me stay and hear what happens, at least till there is a change for the better."

"It goes against the grain to be inhospitable; but after what has happened, I should be uncomfortable if you remained another night under my roof."

"For God's sake, let me wait until——"

"Mr. Frere, I must ask you to make arrangements to leave at once."

"I will go, of course. And it is to be war to the knife?"

"From this time forth we must meet as strangers. I must repeat emphatically that I forbid your communicating with Millicent. I would say that I trust you will not tamper with my servants; but I have no hope of such upright straightforwardness from you."

Alured bowed his head, but did not seek to justify himself.

"You have got your *congé*, remember that," said Lady Moynehan at last. "Be a man, if possible, and abide by what I have said."

What had turned Lady Moynehan from her former kindness to this fierce injustice? Had despair and terror at Millicent's accident unhinged her, driving her to use language foreign to her real nature and feelings? No; there must be more than this.

From the moment he had spoken of Surman, her manner changed. No longer disposed, with kindly effort, to wean him from an ill-advised

attachment, she was now quite defiant and impracticable. Alured wished, from the bottom of his heart, that he had left Starkie's advice alone.

Then he sent for a cab, and had himself driven back, dejected and downcast, to his hut at Claycliffe Camp.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

“Ich blick’ in mein Herz und ich blick’ in die Welt,
Bis vom schimmernden Auge die Thräne mir fällt ;
Wohl leuchtet die Ferne mit goldenem Licht,
Doch hält mich der Nord—ich erreiche sie nicht
O die Schranken so eng, und die Welt so weit,
Und so fluchtig die Zeit !”

GEIBEL.

(Translation.)

I look in the world, and I look in my heart,
Till fast to mine eyes the bitter tears start ;
The distance beams brightly, so golden and fair,
But the north holds me fast : I shall reach it—oh,
ne’er.

How narrow the bound ! and the world is so vast ;
And time flies so fast !

FRERE had neither brain fever next morning, nor did he cut his throat. It was true he had fought his battle of love, and lost it. Goodcot had been his Moscow ; the defeat endured overwhelming. And yet, like other ambitious soldiers, he began at once to cast about to retrieve his fortunes, determined that by no

slackness of effort on his part should the prize be missed for ever. For of his despair was bred a strange, new courage, a stoutness of heart and energy of purpose which had lain hitherto in embryo, waiting to be developed by disappointment or adversity. In this way, his trouble had not been an unmixed evil. Men who are made of good stuff may wait for years to find what is in them. By chance some wake to the knowledge of inward strength ; to others, ill fortune is a forcing-house, bringing out traits good or bad in character, as heat hastens the growth of plants. There had been much in Lady Moynehan's rejection of his suit to wound a man less upright and honourable than Alured Frere. Her reference to his unworthy motives was of itself a grievous insult ; but what hurt our hero more than such unjust accusations was the contempt with which she had treated his outspoken resolve to win Millicent yet. Was he then so entirely unequal that all future success must be thought out of the question ? Youth is the season of unlimited self-confidence, when no dangers deter, and no difficulties are too

great to be grappled with or overcome. And then it was that his pluck rose with his resolves. If she would only wait for him, he would gain the day in the end. He was young; had faith in himself; above all, he had that faith in the unknown future which is a distinguishing characteristic with men of his cloth. I think Micawber might have been a British ensign. The same patient belief in coming luck animates the whole officer class. Year after year they wait, facing hopefully the time to come, as it stretches away in endless perspective, like a desert track or the long vista of a road through a mighty forest. Suddenly, at their feet, opportunity, like a startled hare, scuds across their path. Some catch, others lose it. To many the chance comes so late in life that, with failing strength and friends lost, the boon is barely worth acceptance. Frere was not less sanguine than his comrades. He looked eagerly from the barren present, to a future as bright as the far-off glory of an autumn sunset, but not less distant.

And yet, vague dreams notwithstanding,

Alured Frere counted his chances in no unpractical spirit. Of course it was by his profession that he hoped to rise; in no other walk of life could he succeed so well or so quickly. Adjutant no longer; but it was a direct gain to him to have put this behind. He stood first upon the purchase list, and with promotion to the rank of captain, fresh fields would be opened to his exertions. It is true that the time when these troubles fell upon our hero, was the period which may be called *præ*-Prussian,—before German successes, that is to say, had galvanized our own army into a, perhaps, short-lived vitality. But even then, the military career offered prizes to the industrious. One road of advancement lay open to all; that which led to employment upon the staff, following severe studies at Sandhurst. Alured was ready to serve longer than Jacob for his Rachel; but would a subordinate staff appointment, after two years' successful study, bring him nearer to his love? It was doubtful, and the process was slow and uncertain. And then as to a kiblah, his eyes turned towards the east, where

India, like a glorious Mecca, held forth promises full of vague mysterious hope. This land, since Clive conquered and Wellesley learnt his art, has ever been the nursery of soldiers. While Europe stagnates in humdrum peacefulness, India offers a dozen chances to those who, like Frere, are resolved to work and win.

Meanwhile he wrote to Starkie, detailing his scene with Lady Moynehan.

"I have no intention of giving in," he said, "if Miss St. Helier will only stick to me. But I shall exchange to India directly I get my company, because I feel that there is a better opening for me in that country. But before I leave, I should like to know that I had left no stone unturned at home. As it was by your advice I spoke to Lady Moynehan, I ask you as a friend to help me now, if you can. After the way in which she has treated me, I feel justified in using any pressure to make her change her decision. Not that I care for her consent in the least. If Millicent agrees, I'll marry her in spite of all the aunts in Europe."

Much time elapsed, and still Alured received no reply to this letter. In the interval, he sank several degrees nearer the zero of cold despair. To add to his grief, he could get no authentic information about Millicent. Letter after letter to Lady Moynehan remained unanswered. Every day almost he went to King's Lilies; on foot generally, for he had sold his horse to pay the debts incurred while he was floating—poor earthenware pipkin—among the brass jars on the London waters. It cost him several sovereigns to extract as many words of comfort from the footman. "Her leddyship was not at 'ome to visitors; Miss Sintillier was much indisposed still, but not in hany danger." With such cold comfort he had to be contented, till he heard all at once that the ladies had left King's Lilies. Gone! And without a word!

In all this, Alured had taken none of the dear people at home into his confidence. His mother, with a woman's intuition, had guessed that there must be great attractions at King's Lilies; but she had not inquired point blank,

feeling that Alured, in his own good time, would speak out. Dorothy and Lilian laughed quietly at his letters, full of one subject, and, when they saw him, chaffed him, as girls will, about Miss St. Helier. Old Frere said nothing, but he winked with delight at his wife when Alured talked, during his short visits to Scaggleton, of the friends he had met long ago in Ireland, and whose acquaintance he had just renewed. But soon after the Goodcot catastrophe, he felt constrained to make a clean breast of it to his mother. Sympathy he must have, and he shrank from seeking it among his brother-officers. Kindly and good-natured though they were, he needed more consolation than interjectional remarks between pipe-puffs, apostrophizing the desperate guile of the whole female sex. He told his mother of his failure; of his determination to persevere; of his projects about India. To his father—no indifferent Orientalist—he referred for advice on the subject of Hindustani, of which Alured had already mastered the grammar and character, hoping, as he said, to be half way through the text-books, before the time for his ex-

change. You see Alured did not let the grass grow under his feet.

But at this juncture, there arose an unexpected complication.

“What’s come to him, I wonder,” said Grimes, pathetically, as he removed the untasted breakfast. “He won’t eat; and he won’t drink; and he won’t smoke, leastway he never could.” Life to Grimes would have lost its savour, if he could neither eat, drink, nor smoke. “And he’s mighty hard on the shoe-leather. Them boots is the worry of my life, with cake-muck, and mud; and there’s not a trowsers but’s got ragged at the edges. Bad cess to them country walks! Why won’t he wear knicker-bockers like the rest of them? Perhaps his leg ain’t of the best.”

“Grimes!” shouted his master. “I shan’t be back to mess. I’m going off into the country.”

“You’ll want some new boots, sir, soon—those are poor things you got last—if you go pade-rolling round the place this way.”

“Mind your own business. I’ll have some dinner here when I get back, tell the mess-man.”

"You won't want much, sir, I suppose?" Then, *sotto voce*, "The victuals is clean wasted on him."

"Anything; and some Beaune."

"Bons-bones, or bone? Fish-bones, sir? They'll choke you. Try a fowl, and some entrails."

"Entrails, you ass! Do you mean tripe?"

"Tripe in a silver dish! No; them vollyvongs and stews."

"Be off. I don't want to be worried," said Alured, peevishly, as he flung himself into a chair, and took up a letter he had received that morning. "Leave the room."

Grimes went out.

Presently he opened the door gently, and put his head inside. "And a tart, sir?" he asked.

Soldiers have an idea that pastry should never be omitted from a *menu*.

"I'll tart you," cried Alured in a rage, catching up his hat and rushing out. But Grimes was too nimble for him, and was safe in a moment behind a hastily formed entrenchment of bath-tubs and mops.

This access of increased ill-humour in Alured was easily explained. Major Frere had written

that morning to say that he was no longer in a position to purchase his son's promotion.

The major, as I have said, was a poor man. Through all his soldier-life, by constant drags at the purse-string only, had he managed to make both ends meet. Now, he had his pension, but that died with him, and a private fortune of a few thousand pounds. Not much added together ; but to live was cheap and easy at Scaggleton, and the Frere establishment was on a frugal footing. Indeed, in the course of years a nest egg had grown, penny by penny, till there was a snug sum put by. Major Frere had made no secret of his savings, or of their object ; it was known by all the family that the money was meant to buy Alured on in the service. Our hero himself, counting thus securely on speedy promotion, had perhaps taken a wide or more hopeful estimate of his chances in the future. It must have cut the father to the heart to have read his son's cheerful forecastings ; for already the funds meant for Alured's advancement had been alienated to another purpose.

It had been the major's dream through life to

make money. For this he had regretted that he had not been brought up to trade; and the moment he sheathed his sword, though late in the day, he discussed with himself a dozen schemes for going into business. He had a little capital; brains; active habits. What more was needed? But Messrs. Flintstock & Gibb, the army agents, who had known Robert Frere from a child, and had honoured his cheques faithfully so long as the account stood within a pound or two of even money, threw cold water on the notion. They could recommend him to nothing; markets were overstocked; his capital insufficient; they might have added that to follow the drum was not the best training for business. The major, helpless in such matters as an unborn babe, took the agents' decision as final, and retired to Scaggleton, beyond the reach of all temptation to commercial enterprise. In this remote corner he was safe from bubble companies and astute promoters. Trade was dead at Scaggleton; except in fish. And who was to make a fortune out of fish? The herrings that swam seemingly on purpose to Scaggleton, year after

year, gave the natives bread, but not fortunes. Bread in a dozen different ways. Herring heads and tails were a favourite top-dressing for Scaggleton fields ; Scaggleton streets were paved with scales ; on every cottage-wall strings of fish, dried or drying, hung like votive offerings, dedicated to Saint Herring, the patron of Scaggleton. The local preachers prayed for abundant takes of fish, as in rural districts they ask for rain or rich harvests ; while by stern local tradition, a terrible fate awaited the slayer of the sea-fowl which, like fishermen's detectives, hunted up the whereabouts of the "wanted" shoals. In cottage and castle the herring was the staple food. All day long the air was heavy with the penetrating odour which this toothsome fish gives off in frying. The home of the Freres knew the taste well, though Lilian protested often against the inevitable diet. Most days during the season, Fungus, the major's factotum—better known as Filey—brought out a dozen or two, strung on a fern-stalk, to Scaggleton Castle. Filey was knowing in herrings, following the fishing fleet from point to point in a quick-sailing yawl to purchase

the pick of every "take" in the nets. His were the first herrings in the market always; and his bloaters the reddest and most succulent in the trade. For Filey had the secret of an unrivalled process of curing which he carried on in the strictest seclusion at his private residence, high up a narrow glen, with shelving banks, and a stone-choked freshet stream. Here, in his ruined hovel, he was safe from inquisitive eyes, for after dark no one from Scaggleton would go within a mile of Molly Bawn's Glen. Mrs. Bawn had been in life a lady of ill-repute; after death she was given, people said, to patrolling her former property, carrying her head, freshly severed, under her arm. Such stories had no terrors for Filey Fungus. When his yawl was drawn up on the shingle and made snug for the night, its cargo moved up to the house, and the boy who helped him by day was dismissed to his own home at Scaggleton, Filey commenced work, gutting, cleaning, lighting fires, alone and unspied, save by the wood-smoke which did his business, and went up the chimney without telling tales. Filey's nearest neighbours were the inmates of

Scaggleton Castle. The Norreys girls, in the times of old, had made him their slave ; and he had transferred his allegiance after their departure to the Frere family. In the course of years a certain attachment had sprung up between them. He did all sorts of odd jobs at the Castle : called of an evening for the post-bag, and sold the major fish. The lonely old man was drawn irresistibly to these kind-hearted people ; but he was bound to them for ever, when Mrs. Frere, in spite of horrors and haunting hags, came to the glen to nurse Filey through a serious illness. After this even the first fruits of his labours in curing seemed an inadequate recognition of his debt : one morning he startled the major by offering to tell him how the herrings were cured.

“ Bless the man ! ” cried Major Frere ; “ you might as well make me a present of a tame porpoise.”

“ Nobbut, major, it cures them, and well ; and they’re tasty, tasty, too.”

“ I’m quite ready to buy them from you, Filey. I don’t want to cure my herrings for myself.”

“But see now, major ; suppose you and me was to go into partnership like, we might turn a bit of money. I won't say but what I haven't made money already.”

This was bringing temptation close home to Robert Frere. He might send Filey away with a laughing refusal, but not the less did he turn the proposal over in his mind. Several points struck him forcibly : the abundance of the fish, and the excellence of Filey's process. Then land and labour were cheap in Scaggleton, if they extended their operations ; and through Coxmouth most markets were within reach. With frequent talks with Fungus, and a more intimate knowledge of the details of the business, he became more and more enamoured of the scheme. Filey's success depended mainly on the early treatment of the fish after it was caught, to ensure which, he trusted to the fast sailing qualities of his yawl. With a steam launch, now, they might gain hours. The density and pungency of the wood-smoke was another important item in the process, and Filey confessed to frequent failures when unable to buy exactly the wood suited for fuel.

Buying wholesale would render such a difficulty impossible. From talking, Frere came to figures; counting the cost of herrings fresh caught, and the price they fetched at Scaggleton when cured. Filey's price was necessarily low, but even with it and with small sales there was a fair margin of profit. By degrees, Major Frere argued himself into a thorough belief that fortune was within his reach. Nor was Mrs. Frere, sensible woman, less sanguine; though she counselled prudence and cautious advance. But once committed to the scheme, there were many unavoidable preliminary expenses. The new partners must be protected by a patent; larger premises than the dark hut in Molly Bawn's glen must be rented; hands hired; clerks kept; bonuses paid to secure contracts for fish. Major Frere threw himself into the business with an energy that was quite a new phase in his character. He did all that was needed to secure success; and in the end it was sure to come. But there was at first considerable outlay, without a farthing return. Law expenses and patent fees swelled the account, till the major found he must sacrifice

his son's interests, at least for a time, to those of the new business. On the top of this resolve came Alured's confession; and it was received with inexpressible grief at Scaggleton Castle. His parents felt that they failed him at a moment when he most needed their help. I believe, that had it been possible to withdraw, Major Frere would have cast Filey Fungus and the Molly Bawn bloaters to the four winds of heaven. But the deed of partnership was drawn, and the capital already committed. And then,—it was only delaying for a time; by-and-by he would be able to purchase for Alured, and more, thought the major, as he abandoned himself to golden dreams of the bright future in store for his project.

The blow fell heavily upon Alured, crushing for the moment all the hope that was in him. He felt sentenced suddenly to life-long despair. The world was grown all at once as narrow as a prison-house, without an outlet or loophole of escape through the black bars to that open space, the free limitless air, where he had hoped to flap his strong wings, and soar upward to success. With promotion alone was

that success possible. Now, wars seemed at an end, and all advancement out of the question. Alured, unable to buy promotion, might wait for years as he was, toiling incessantly at routine duties without a glimmer of light, or moving a step towards Millicent. And would she wait for years? For five years, or three, or one? Then, for the first time, he regretted the chance that had made him a soldier. If his father had but bound him to a solicitor at Coxmouth, or sent him to college, or had let him read for the law; in such lines of life at least, he might have assured himself a certain unpretending success. Bread, competency, comfort, would have depended on his own exertions, and not, as now, on chance. But never to have known Millicent?—he could hardly surrender the memory of the past.

In changeful mood and uncertain temper, easily ruffled, where once a cheery laugh met every care, Alured gave evidence of the wounds that now oppressed him sore. A son less loyal might have questioned his father's conduct, and chafed at the injury endured. But Alured suffered no word of complaint to escape him;

he saw too plainly the motives which had urged Major Frere to act with such seeming unfairness towards him. Could he, a son well placed already, and afloat on his own account, quarrel with his father for seeking to ensure to the rest of the family a comfortable provision against the future? They would need money more than he did; and while he cursed his luck inwardly, Alured strove to quiet his father's self-upbraidings by letters full of affectionate approval, disclaiming all desire for promotion at the expense of such a splendid scheme as that set on foot at Scaggleton.

And now at last came news from Starkie. He was at Homburgh, trying to break the banks.

"It's about the best excitement I know," he wrote, "having tried all. But I hope to be in town again soon,—before the winter begins. I can't feed on this foreign filth all the year round, and though I hate cold weather, it seems to me that the club is the only decently warmed place there is—on earth, that is to say. When I get back, we'll have a talk over your affairs. Don't be down hearted, but dine with me at the 'Mars and Neptune,' on the 15th October."

In the military world the processes of nature are reversed. October brings the "leaves," and April ends them. Alured got his three months' furlough, and passing through London, *en route* for Scaggleton, found Starkie at the club. The doctor was as much at home at the "Mars and Neptune," as he had been in days gone by at mess. Before him the club steward trembled and the secretary hung his head. The servants flew at his lightest bidding, and on general meetings his tremendous voice, striking terror into the committee, was a sort of battle-cry for the disaffected.

When they sat down, Starkie said, "I've ordered the fatted veal to be killed for you, my prodigal. I don't suppose you'll get it. They've never anything fit to eat in this house, the way things are managed."

Starkie was deeply read in the mysteries of the carte. His dinner was perfect, and they were waited upon like princes of the blood royal. But even the generous wine failed at first to loosen Alured's tongue. He was a little shy of Starkie, and feared ridicule and rough handling.

His cynical old friend, finding Alured dumb, broke the ice himself.

"You're well out of it all, Boy Frere. Queer lot that."

"Which lot?"

"Lady Moynehan and her—niece."

Alured flushed rather angrily at Starkie's contemptuous tone.

"Stop, boy; don't get angry. Tell me first how was it? Why did they reject you?"

"Not match enough, Lady Moynehan said. I told you so in my letter."

"She did? And did you mention Noke Surman's name, as I advised you?"

"I sincerely wish I hadn't. It was that which made her so angry. I believe she'd have given in but for that. My threats, as she called them—why, I do not know—made her furious."

Starkie said nothing at first; but he looked at Frere kindly, and shook his head.

"Perhaps it was a mistake to play that card then. But it don't do to bottle them up always."

A short pause, and he went on:—

“Well, *I* say you are well out of it. *You* don't agree with me of course. What do you mean to do now?”

“What can I do but grin and bear it? I am quite helpless myself. Can you advise me? I'd like to make her sorry for this—Lady Moynehan I mean.”

“I could advise you, at least I could tell you a strange story which might help you a little. But I think it is better not. Wait; it'll all come right some day.”

“Some day is a long day. How am I ever to get on in the service? I can't purchase. I wish I could cut it.”

“Don't leave the ship.”

“I can't of course. I'm not fit for anything else. No one ever is who takes the Queen's shilling.”

“They don't teach you much, do they, beyond deportment and good manners? A little tailoring, now, or blacksmith's work would have been more useful.”

“It's all luck too. There's Protheroe, who passed when I did, has been a captain these two years.”

“Being a captain would not bring you anywhere nearer your desires, would it?”

“Not for certain; but I could exchange then to India, or where there was something going on.”

“Even then they wouldn't have you I expect,—the swells I mean. You have flown your kite too high. But cheer up, there's quite as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it.”

Alured would rather have the fish he had hooked for himself already. He was in no humour to cast his line again into the waters.

“I tell you once more, Boy Frere, that you are well out of it. Come, have some more wine. No? Then we'll go to the play. I have taken two stalls.”

And not another word would Starkie utter on the subject of Alured's love.

Next day our hero went home to Scaggleton.

CHAPTER IX.

A NEW FIELD.

“ I suddenly must cross the seas
To get myself a name ;
For in love’s camp no man can rise
Who is unknown to fame.”

SIR CHARLES SEDLEY.

It was not until Alured had been some time at home that he had news of Millicent. Some months had elapsed since the great Goodcot event, and in the interval, for all his trouble, he could hear nothing satisfactory of Lady Moynehan and her niece. After they had left King’s Lilies he wrote to Carlton Gardens. No answer. Then he called at the house in town. It was shut up. Were they at Moynehan Castle? He wrote to an old friend at Ballybanagher to inquire. No ; the ladies were abroad—in the Pyrenees. A wide address.

Meanwhile at Scaggleton he remained, striving to face his troubles like a man. Moody, preoccupied, for all his efforts to conceal his

feelings, he gave his people reason for much tender concern. But he cut short all attempts at consolation, and would take no one, not even Lilian, into his confidence. He preferred to be alone ; roaming across the bluff windy cliffs, gaining some satisfaction in battling with the elements ; or pacing the long lonely shore, with no one to speak to him but the screaming sea-gulls, no living soul to disturb his reveries but the rough country people, far off among the rocks, harvesting the sea-weed blown in by the constant gales. Now and then he borrowed a crop-eared pony from a neighbouring farm, and galloped for hours upon the breezy uplands. Sometimes, to please his father, he visited the counting-house of the "Molly Bawn Bloater Company," peering over accounts amidst the fish fragrance, or wandered through the yard while the major and Fungus explained the theory of the work in progress.

It was then that his father begged Alured to throw in his lot with them. The business must thrive ; in a year or two the money sunk would be more than doubled. Alured might be a wealthy man before he was forty.

But no ; the young man hesitated to relinquish his profession yet. If he could but get his promotion !

We are sometimes nearest our heart's desire when we least expect it. Dawn is close at hand when the dreary darkness of the night watches is heavy beyond endurance. Alured's blackest hours were now nearly over.

One morning he heard from Lady Moynehan ; flushing scarlet under the eyes of the whole breakfast party, as he recognised her hand-writing. It was a cold disagreeable letter. Her ladyship regretted that she could not write at length, but feeling that his persistent pursuit of them must be put an end to, she enclosed a letter from Miss St. Helier, which would have, she hoped, the desired effect. Miss St. Helier quite coincided with her (Lady Moynehan) that the match was ineligible, and would herself give Mr. Frere his *congé* !

The first line of Millicent's short note convinced Alured that she had deserted him. Plunging abruptly into the middle of her subject, she began thus :—

“ DEAR MR. FRERE,—I was very wrong to have listened

to you at all. Don't think harshly of me when I tell you that everything must be at end between us. Indeed, indeed I can never marry you. Aunt Moynehan is the only relative I have in the world ; she has been like a mother to me always, and I cannot go against her.

“ May God bless you and prosper you—may I say so much ? Some day you will be a great man, and I should like to feel that I had done something towards helping you on your road. But that you will never know. Good-bye, Alured, good-bye for ever.”

A sad awakening ! He had hoped so much from Millicent's promise of unalterable constancy ; and yet, within a month or two, she dismissed him with a few hollow words. How was he to guess the tears it had cost her to write them ?

And now indeed the world was out of joint ; its joys tasteless, its sorrows bitterer than death. He tried to brave it out too ; gulping down his disappointment with his tea. Had there been mustard on his plate, he might have blamed it for the wateriness in his eyes ; but there was no excuse for weakness, and hating that the others should notice and interpret his looks, he got up quickly from the table, and left the room. So quickly that another letter from his regi-

mental agents was left unopened. Mrs. Frere, following him later to the little study which he had always called his own room, brought it with her, and gave it with a few soft soothing words which went far to unman him altogether.

“I never thought to win her, mother; but then it seemed as if I had the right to ask after all these years of acquaintance. I ought to have known, I suppose, how far too good she was for me.”

“Too good! As if any girl could be too good for my boy.”

“I shall never be happy again, mother.”

“You’ll get over even this in time, Alured.”

“I wish I could get away—away to the other end of the world. England is loathsome to me. I want to hide myself—at the other end of God speed.”

He held in his hand the means of escape that moment, but he did not know it. The letter was from his regimental agents, and ran as follows :—

“SIR,—Captain Featherstone, who exchanged recently to the 145th, being anxious to retire from the service, has

begged of us to inquire what sum you are disposed to give in excess of the regulation price.

"We are aware that Major Frere recently withdrew your name from the purchase list; but as the sum of £2000 has this day been placed to your credit with us, we presume that you are again in a position to purchase, and we beg the favour of an early reply.

"We remain, etc., etc.,

"FLINTSTOCK & GIBB."

Why, what in the name of fortune did this mean? Money placed to his credit by an unknown hand at the moment when he was most helpless and despondent! He read and reread the agents' letter, scarcely trusting his eyes. He took it to his father, and begged him to explain. Had the major done it himself, wishing to wipe away disappointment by a happy surprise? No; Major Frere was lost too in bewilderment.

"I cannot take it, father," said Alured all at once. "It must be from her. What right has she to insult me like this? She shall not play Lady Bountiful to me. I shall refuse—distinctly refuse."

"But why should you think that Miss St. Helier has done it? How could she have the

command of such a sum of money? It's the most Quixotic affair I ever came across."

"Look, father, at this letter; she says 'I should be glad to think I had done something to help you on your road.' Of course it is from her. She has plenty of money. I wish she hadn't."

"And what could she know about purchasing and the prices?" went on Major Frere, still doubtful.

"I have talked it over often with her. At first she knew nothing, of course. I remember," said Alured, with a sad laugh, "she wanted once to write to the commander-in-chief to buy me a full colonelcy right off."

"Perhaps it is as you say. And what shall you do?"

"Refuse, of course."

"Think it over well. Sleep on it, my boy. The chance is a good one, and should not be thrown away without due consideration."

It would be tedious to recount the long argument which Alured tried with himself, to mention all the pros and cons, to give the

letters that passed between him and Messrs. Flintstock & Gibb.

The agents would give him no advice ; they repeated that the money had been paid in by certain well-known bankers, who begged that no questions might be asked, as their client wished to remain incognito. And must it really be Millicent ? Was it likely that Lady Moynehan would permit her niece to appropriate money to such a purpose ? But then, if it were not she, who else could dream of such a thing ? Meanwhile Featherstone pressed for an answer ; ambition tugged at his heart-strings, father and mother counselled him to accept.

Before the end of the year he was gazetted captain, had arranged an exchange to a regiment serving in the Madras presidency, and was under orders to sail forthwith, in charge of a draft of men to join it.

Of Alured's old friends, none accompanied him into exile. Even Grimes had to be left behind,—the faithful valet, who was too aged and broken for Indian service, and whose transfer to the 110th, Alured's new regiment,

was out of the question. Grimes swore that he had an elder brother in the 110th, and claimed the soldier's right to serve by the side of the head of the family. But the statement was not borne out by the documents of the depot of the 110th; and when questioned, Grimes exhibited painful ignorance, not only as to his brother's age, Christian name, and place of birth, but upon such simple facts as the residence and calling of their common father.

Grimes finding the case going against him, threatened,—in the secure privacy of his kitchen,—to write direct to the Queen for permission to join the 110th; and some time later, when his bunk was overhauled, there was in fact found in his cleaning bag, amidst brass balls, pipeclay, crumbs, and old regimental buttons, a document addressed to the Queen's Majesty, at Windsor Paliss, or elsewhere. The discovery of this very compromising paper would have glorified Grimes considerably in the eyes of his comrades, had not the same search brought to light manuscripts convicting him of the unsoldierlike practice of writing verse. One of these poems, composed appa-

rently when he expected to proceed to the East, was addressed to a certain "Nancy," and contained the following touching lines :—

"My Nancy was ready to bring if I ast
Lashings of rum and pots full of beer ;
But now, when the bugal sounds with sweet blast,
I must away from my dear."

Alured, too, embarking on board the good ship *Oceola*, at Portsmouth, sailed away from his "dear," and in three months they anchored in Madras Roads. Just too late; the 110th had been removed to New Zealand. The Maoris were again in arms, and reinforcements much needed at the seat of war. After a few weeks' delay, spent in luxury at the Madras Club, our hero again took ship, for the South Pole. It was not till the white peak of Mount Egmont hove in sight, standing "sunset flushed, a silent pinnacle of aged snow," above the southern sea, that Alured felt his journey at an end.

But now, landing at Auckland, he found himself in a strange new land, whereof the external aspects were as unfamiliar as the faces around. He was on the brink, as it were, of one of

Nature's forges, amid slag and burnt-up blocks of stone, the ashes and scoriæ of her furnace fires. Tall crateriform hills were her chimneys: vents and air holes these, for the terrible machinery that worked within. The land itself seemed a thin crust, a flooring of half-inch planks, through chinks in which the subterranean forces were seen to surge and struggle. The very vegetation around spoke of the newness of the soil; the huge tree-ferns and the wealth of cryptogamic plants were evidence of the recent formation of these islands. A soil so recent that animal life in indigenous specimens was hardly known, till pigs and dogs and horses were introduced by civilized man. Rats till then had been the only quadruped; eels, self-sprung perhaps from native mud, the only fish in its fresh waters; the only bird, except in the timbered districts, the little bunting that ran along by your side as you travelled. A land, like the warfare in which Alured was to earn his laurels, new and contrary to all his previous experiences.

When the historian of the future shall treat as one subject all England's "little wars," he

will surely give to that of New Zealand the importance it deserves. To fight with savage tribes is a less glorious conflict perhaps than the shock of arms between nations of the civilized world, yet as an enemy, the Maori is no contemptible foe. The New Zealanders are warriors by descent, by custom, by inclination. A love of fighting for fighting's sake, is an element in the Maori character, as in that of the typical coat-trailing Irishman. Incessant intertribal wars have rent the land since the first immigrants paddled themselves across from Hawaii in their war-canoes. To emulate the deeds of those whose names are handed down in the heroic traditions of the past, is the one proud dream of a brave Maori youth. And they are brave, one and all. Their fierce passions are roused to fury by the strange wild gestures,—“more inspiriting,” says one who knew them, “than grog or martial music,”—of their native war-dance. Nor are they wanting, savages though they be, in many of those qualities without which mere bravery is of no avail. Good generalship and sound judgment were not unknown among their

leaders ; they possessed that almost instinctive military skill, which grasps at once the plan of action most suited to their needs, and the plan of the campaign. Their tactics might have been tested by the strictest rules. Having no artillery to reply to ours, theirs was a defensive warfare. Secure in the shelter of their pahs, they awaited attack. To beat them, we had to reach them, to carry by storm stronghold after stronghold, constructed with the genius of born engineers, in which flanking defence was recognised as a first principle; where traverses protected the defenders from enfilade fire, and where, covered by palisades in double rows, they held the assailants in check under a murderous hail of double-barrelled guns discharged with great rapidity and precision. Nor did they shrink always before the irresistible British bayonet ; when it came to a hand-to-hand fight, they could make terrible play with their long-handled tomahawks. Holding with desperate tenacity the very centre of the island for which they fought, they were acting, so to speak, "on interior lines," threatening at will a dozen different points along the circumference, which

for us, were isolated each from each, save by a tedious sea-journey; needing no roads, for the narrow tracks worn by centuries of naked feet sufficed for soldiers unencumbered with bag or baggage; independent of base or communications, because they held, here, there, and everywhere, deep in the recesses of the forest itself, depots of supply—fields of potatoes (the legacy of Captain Cook) planted years before, in anticipation of this very war. With such advantages their inferiority to our troops in a measure disappeared. And their country, in its configuration, fought on their side. Our progress was slow and difficult. The Aiwato River,* our line of advance, lay between high hill slopes, densely overgrown with giant ferns and trees, laced together in an inextricable tangle, by the *kari*, or supplejack, and broken at times by deep ravines, crossing the water-course at right angles, each of which must be bridged over. The ground, in the close country, was admirably suited for ambuscades, a notable stratagem in Maori warfare; and

* In this and all other cases, fictitious names have been employed.

when open or flat it was swampy, and covered with the *zauſo* reed.

The army in the field was five days distant from Auckland, and to Alured the journey was irksome and monotonous. At first by the military road, a dreary dusty march as far as the Victoria Redoubt; thence by water, along the river Aiwato itself, in heavy barges, pulled by a motley crew of soldiers and sailors, at the rate of a mile and a half an hour. Often the boats stuck fast in sand-banks; for the river was shallow, and the channel so narrow that it was difficult to escape the great tree trunks in the water. On the fourth day the detachment reached Waiwahia, not long before the residence of a leading Maori, and known still as the King's Palace; but with little regal to recommend it, except to the superstitious native mind, as the burial ground of their greatest chieftains. From Waiwahia another march of twelve miles. A tortuous track this; leading at times along the river bank, at others diving into the recesses of the bush, waist-deep in the swamp, except where by chance a Maori bridge of roughly felled timbers still

remained ; and then, at last, the British encampment.

A staff officer, Mauleverer, the quartermaster-general of the forces, met Alured on his arrival.

" You belong to the 110th ? Your regiment is not here."

" Not here ?" A will-o'-the-wisp this new regiment of his.

" It is detached with Brigadier Bowles."

" I should like to get to it."

" That's impossible I'm afraid."

Alured asked why.

" The country between us is occupied by the enemy, and with such a handful of men as yours it would be madness to send you on. We'll attach you to some other regiment in the meantime here."

Alured's face fell at the prospect of this further delay in joining his new regiment ; but not unmindful of his previous campaignings, he busied himself to get his tent pitched, while some of the men gathered fresh reeds for his bed, and his servant unpacked the master's modest field kit.

By-and-by Mauleverer came back.

“You’re quite new to this place are you not?”

“I only landed last week.”

“Oh, then it’s quite out of the question. I had been thinking——”

“Yes?”

“Only that as you are so anxious to get to your regiment, you might carry some despatches to General Bowles. But it would not be fair to ask you. It’s such a dangerous service that I’ve advised the chief to call for volunteers.”

“What’s the danger?”

“Thirty miles of bush, with the Maoris as thick as berries.”

“I’ll go. I should like it.”

Alured thought himself in luck. An opening this, before he had been half an hour in presence of the enemy!

“We must mount you; you can’t go on foot. Are you a good man on a horse? You may have to gallop for it. But come, I’ll take you to the general.”

And to the general they went, where Mau-

leverer introduced Alured as a young gentleman dying to distinguish himself.

"Death or Westminster Abbey; hey what, what?" said no other than Sir Octavius.

"When can you start, sir? Hey?"

"At once, sir."

"Yes, sir; so you shall. Have you got a good mount? They mustn't catch you; they'd play the mischief with you; yes, they would. Send your skull round full of your own blood, to take wine with each other. How would you like that, hey? what, what, what?"

"I'll take my chance, sir."

"Do you want any escort?"

"Numbers might attract attention. Perhaps I'd better go alone."

"Quite right, quite right; but you don't know the road. How long have you been in the country, hey? Five minutes about, or perhaps ten?"

"I can get a guide I suppose, sir?"

"That's right; you're the man for my money. Never make difficulties; throw yourself into what you've got to do, and don't create obstacles."

“That’s what you told me, sir, before.”

“Why, I never clapped eyes on you before.”

“At the Horse Guards, sir, years ago. I wanted to be sent to the Crimea.”

“What, that little chap who came to my levée all by himself! Goodness gracious, you don’t say so. I’m delighted to meet you again, Mr.——Mr.——”

“Captain Frere.”

“Captain Frere, then; shake hands. It’s some comfort to know that I made a man of you. I liked your coming to me that day, and I’m glad that you’re out here.”

“When ought he to start, sir?” asked Maulverer.

“Do you mind travelling by night, Captain Frere? It’s the safest time; and you’ll have to ride for it. How about a horse? Are you well mounted?”

Frere had not had time to provide himself yet.

“Take one of mine,” said the general very kindly; and by dusk Alured found everything ready. Horse saddled at the general’s door;

the guide standing at its head. Our hero examined both critically, as one does those who have us in their power.

The horse had the best of it,—a powerful animal, clean limbed and well ribbed up, which Alured felt he might trust at a pinch; but was Te Aperahama, the guide, equally deserving of confidence? Certainly in appearance he was not prepossessing. The hideous expression of his countenance was heightened unpleasantly by liberal tattoo marks, woven in circles across nose, both cheeks, and forehead,—blue upon a brown ground. He appeared to be in a state of terror moreover, real or feigned, and this diminished still further his personal attractions. He was dressed in an old red flannel shirt and dirty trowsers; his feet and head were bare, though the latter was protected by a thick growth of coarse black hair. He refused to speak; shook his head when Alured asked him a question, and made signs that he did not understand, or muttered a word or two in Maori.

As soon as they were beyond the camp, Alured drew his revolver, and motioned to the

guide that he must give up his arms. Te Aperahama protested with the wildest gestures.

“Get off, you scoundrel,” cried Frere, still presenting the pistol; “get off your horse, and let me see for myself.”

The guide dismounted at once, proving that on an emergency he could understand English.

Having satisfied himself that the guide was really unarmed, Alured said, “Now, you ride in front, there, a yard or two; that’ll do. See this; I’ll shoot you dead, bang through your head, if you attempt to play me false.”

By this time the shadows were lengthening, and the night drew on apace. There was no moon, but already a star or two glimmered in the pale sky. All around was as still as death; so still that you might have heard the fern fronds brushing against their knees as they rode along the narrow track through the scrub. Up hill and down, skirting large clumps of forest trees, dense and impenetrable; sinking deep in the slime of the swampy flats,—an hour or two of such travelling brought them to a wide river into which the guide pressed his horse, and swam to the other side. Alured

followed. The bank beyond was difficult to climb, but gaining the top they came upon a long undulating plain across which they made good progress, till, all at once, the guide stopped dead short, and would not move an inch ahead.

At a loss to comprehend his action, Alured, speaking sharply, threatened to fire.

“*Kahore, kahore* (no, no),” replied Te Aperahama, cringing down close to his horse’s neck. “Maoris ! Maoris !”

There, just to the left of their path, in a slight hollow, were the roofs of a native village.

“What matter,” said Alured, putting a bold face on the matter, though his heart sank within him. “March on ; I’m not going to turn back having come so far. Go on I say. I swear I’ll shoot you, like a dog, if you halt another second.”

There was no mistaking Alured’s language, even had the revolver spoken in less positive and distinct terms. Of two evils, certain death or chance of capture, Te Aperahama chose the least, and moved on with slow and cautious steps till they were close upon the village it-

self. Then Frere took the lead. Pushing on his horse into a fast gallop he passed the guide, determined to charge and ride down all opposition. But there was none. The *whares* (native houses) were a little off the track, the watchmen were asleep or afraid to move far in the darkness of the night. Alured and his companion were beyond all danger before the inhabitants of the village had heard the echoes of his horse hoofs.

Then came a belt of brushwood ; a steep hill to climb ; a rapid descent upon the farther side, where at the foot lay a second village, and this time right athwart their path.

Again the guide halted, "jibbing" more resolutely than before. His teeth were chattering from fright. Again the pistol persuasion was applied, and quite without effect. Alured was now half convinced of the guide's good faith, and he was unwilling to draw the enemy upon him by firing a shot.

Dismounting, he gave his horse to the guide, and crept forward like a snake through the grass, to reconnoitre.

Each instant he held his breath. He fan-

ced he heard voices, and strained every nerve to listen. Not a sound but the beating, thump, thump, thump, of his own heart.

Closer and closer, till amid the death-like stillness he was right among the huts.

The place was deserted.

For the rest of the night they travelled on ; sometimes on smooth ground, sometimes on rough. Not seldom caught up and almost dragged from their saddles by the officious supplejack that laid traps for them as intricate as a spider's web, with its long nervous arms ; and never altogether free from that anxiety which the bravest man will feel when facing the vague mysterious dangers of the night.

But as day dawned they were beyond the enemy's reach, and were able to join in the morning thanksgiving of the birds of the forest—to emulate the sonorous balderdash of the parson bird (*tui*), in his gown and bands, the harsh-voiced parrot, or the *mako mako*, whose note is like the chime of distant bells. Dangers past, Alured was free to enjoy, in the early light, the beauties of nature around. His horse trod under foot the grass of the open

glades, hemmed in by the majestic forest trees, chief among which towered the *rāta*, decked with crimson blossoms, or the tall barkless fuchsia, shedding its soft flowers upon the ground. Plants of parasitic growth hung pendant from the trees, and bright-coloured evergreens completed the picture.

CHAPTER X.

FAME.

“Che seggendo in piuma
In fama non se viene, ne' sotto coltre.”

DANTE : *Inferno*, canto xv.

IT was broad daylight when Alured, followed by his guide, rode into General Bowles' encampment. A stranger bearing the numerals 110 upon his regimental forage-cap, attracted the attention of all who were already stirring, for the force was a small one, and everybody knew everybody else. Our hero, as he pulled up his horse to a walk, and passed slowly up the line of tents, was soon aware that many curious eyes were turned upon him. As no one spoke to him, our hero was forced at last to ask his way to the brigadier's head-quarters.

“Who are you, man?” said an officer of the 110th, who came up at the moment.

“Frere is my name.”

“Frere of ours? Come to join at last! We've wanted you bad enough all these times.”

This was Harry Halkett, a brother captain.

“And where have you dropped from?”

“Just ridden from the Aiwato.”

“Walker!”

“I have, indeed. Ask my friend here,” said Alured, pointing to the guide, whose demoniacal face was toning down to comparative beauty and repose in the security and safety afforded him by the British camp.

“Merely to join? You *are* keen.”

“No; I have brought despatches for the general, too. Will you tell me—”

“Fancy riding through the bush and those Maori devils, just to join! By Jove, now!” remarked Halkett, whose mind clung to the first aspect of the affair.

“If you please,” said Alured, laughing, “I’d like to see the brigadier, and get my business over.”

But the business did not end here. For the news of his plucky ride, the day after his arrival in a strange country, flew fast through the camp, and every one for a time had “Frere of the 110th” on his lips. It was a capital introduction to his new regiment. The old

colonel, a stately, white-haired old man, very different from Gaynor, shook Alured's hand with grave courtesy, and spoke a very kindly welcome.

"It showed you were in earnest to get to us, Captain Frere. We ought to get on together, though this is a new regiment to you."

And the brigadier, who had received a line of introduction from Sir Octavius with the despatches, told Frere he was glad to make his acquaintance. A more substantial mark of his approval followed. As Alured was well mounted on the horse that Sir Octavius had lent him, he was attached soon after his arrival to the handful of troopers that constituted the cavalry of Bowles' brigade. They were commanded by Colonel Mackinnon, a fine dashing soldier, to whom Alured proved an able lieutenant. He had already given good promise, being evidently a daring, determined young fellow, full of energy and enterprise. These qualities more than compensated for his inexperience in Maori warfare; and when all were in the dark in this strange land, it

was impossible to call one more blind than another.

This force under Brigadier Bowles had been pushed forward by Sir Octavius to outflank the enemy, while the main body on the Aiwato attacked him in front. With this object Bowles was manœuvring on the left rear of the Maori position, his communications safe with his base, which rested on the sea-coast; but before him the country stretched like a dense impenetrable screen, through which, inch by inch, step by step, he was ordered to advance with the utmost caution, "feeling" for the enemy, but undertaking no decisive offensive movement till the moment for combined action had arrived. While it was of paramount importance, then, to avoid an actual collision, it was still incumbent upon Bowles to know where his enemy lay. For this he depended mainly on Mackinnon's horse. They were his *éclaireurs*, the long antennæ, by which he groped his way ahead as a cunning crustacean travels along an unknown path.

Frere, throwing himself with ardour into his new duties, soon gained the approval of his

chief. In the saddle at daybreak, he was on the move, one way or another, till night; for ever reconnoitring new ground in front of the advanced posts,—hunting wild pigs his excuse, a craving for excitement and opportunity to distinguish himself the real incentives that urged him on. More than once he was in the most imminent danger. Thus: returning, towards dusk, from a lengthy ride, accompanied by half a dozen troopers only, as he rounded the corner of a wood which had hitherto concealed them from his sight, he came upon a party of Maoris. They were on the march, probably, but had halted for a moment on a knoll close in front of Frere, but some seventy yards off the track. Safety depended now on pace. Advancing at a hand gallop, Frere and his men faced the first volley of the enemy without accident; but as they came close up and abreast of the knoll, one of the horses stumbled and fell. Trooper and steed rolled over together, and there was a momentary panic.

“Ride on, ride on, for your lives!” cried Frere. “I’ll see to him.”

In a moment he had grasped the bridle of the fallen charger as it struggled to its feet. Then with cool daring he helped the trooper to remount. Shot after shot was fired at the pair, but happily without effect. A minute more, and both were beyond danger or pursuit. Hairbreadth escapes such as this, following too rash and unnecessary exposure, brought our hero more than once under reproof. The brigadier did not wish to lose a useful subordinate, and Mackinnon was perhaps a little jealous.

But the time came when Alured's knowledge of ground, acquired thus at great personal risk, was to be turned to good account. It became evident soon that a general advance was close at hand. Rumours that Sir Octavius had gained a battle were followed by constant alarms at the outposts, near which considerable bodies of the enemy were at times observed to pass. The Maoris must be in full retreat; they had been beaten back upon their second line. Bowles's time had come.

Not unexpectedly, the brigade was ordered to move forward *en masse*. It was reported that a

dozen miles in front, a large force of the enemy, falling back from the Aiwato, had taken up a strong position. Bowles had been directed to storm and carry this at all costs, lest it should serve as a rallying-point for the bands already broken up and in flight. Headed by Mac-kinnon's horse, they pushed forward with all speed. The ground was difficult to the troops ; the forest tracks, encumbered with scrub or dense brushwood, the open land breast high with ferns or the *mammaku* plant, with its sweet scented flower.

All at once the troopers of the advanced guard galloped back to say they had come upon a native village strongly fortified. It was evidently garrisoned and held in force.

Bowles knew now that he had come upon his quarry. Ordering a halt, he sent forward Captain Frere with a small escort to reconnoitre.

A nasty job ; but this neighbourhood was not altogether unknown to our hero.

Somewhere near this he had been before ; but not the less did he ride forward with caution.

Yes ; he knew the place. There was the river curving round the village, protecting one

flank ; a deep ravine guarded the other with an impassable barrier. But when he had seen it last the village had been deserted ; now smoke curled up from the *whares* (native houses) within the palisading. Spurring his horse, he galloped forward, meaning to examine more closely some new made entrenchments, built like a *flèche* from the straight side of the pah.

This increase of speed saved his life. Before he was aware of his danger he flushed an ambuscade—as pretty a covey of nearly naked Maoris as ever rose to an enemy's gun. The terrible fern, with its giant fronds hanging close over the track, had given them cover. One moment of suspense, then, deceived by Alured's undaunted advance, and deeming him to be at the head of numbers, they turned and fled towards a belt of timber close at hand, which communicated with the Maori intrenchments. Almost at the same time Alured left the track and plunged in among the fern. The enemy opened fire, but he escaped unhurt, and taking up a position behind a clump of *rata* trees, some of them of enormous girth, proceeded to complete his observations.

Without adverting to his narrow escape, he reported to the brigadier in full what he had seen. The place was strong evidently, and had been recently repaired. Even at a distance Alured could observe the new strong withes of flax fibre, binding post to post in the palisading. It might resist a direct attack in front, but the river was fordable at a point which he had discovered some weeks before, and by crossing it the enemy's position might be taken in reverse.

That night when all was perfectly still, half the brigade marched by a long detour to the river bank, where, under Alured's guidance, they crossed at the ford. By day-break the British troops had entirely surrounded the Maori position.

Seen, however, from the rear, the nut seemed as hard to crack as from the front; yet Bowles resolved to attack. Time pressed. The place might fall by a *coup de main*—a combined assault in front and rear. Moving along three lines of attack, the skirmishers, backed up by strong supports, advanced upon the pah; a withering fire met them at the first or hanging palisade, and our men could get no further..

Anxious to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, the general changed his tactics and decided to "sap up" to the place. But parallels of approach are not dug in a day, and some days elapsed before the attack could be renewed.

As time passed, the Maoris within seemed to grow wild with rage and desperation. Hemmed in on every side, retreat was impossible; capture or death inevitable. To prepare themselves for the bloody fight now imminent, they spent hours in savage dances, inspiring the weak and working up the brave to madness. Such hideous yells and cries, horrible and unearthly, as rose from the interior of the pah might have shaken the stoutest heart. But Bowles' men beaten back were like bloodhounds in the leash, frantic to be loosed again upon the foe. Taking advantage of a moment when the enemy were most busy with their dance, Bowles sent his stormers from the head of the sap, against the post and rail fence that surrounded the pah. A number of men armed with axes led the way, to make an opening for the column, which was composed of the 110th, under the gallant Greatorrex, their aged

and much loved chief. The palisade, stoutly built, would not easily yield. While the axemen cut and hewed, the enemy lying *perdu* opened a murderous fire upon the attacking party. The casualties on all sides became numerous; Greatorex, who with inimitable coolness was standing in the fore-front, was struck down. A check followed; the men felt that in him their guiding spirit was gone. They lost heart, wavered, and would have fallen back, just as the passage had been effected, too, through the palisades. But Frere, who had been acting as extra aide to the brigadier, returning from a mission to one of the colonels beyond the river, at this instant galloped by. His duty was of course by his general's side, but this chance of failure stirred all the blood in his veins. We may call it fiendish, barbarous, brutal, the instinct of the lower animals, that trumpet, and snort, and grow mad when the hour of combat approaches, but man is unhappily a fighting animal too, and has been since the old warriors of Israel girded up their loins to smite the Amalekites, or the well greaved Greeks tussled with the Trojans

by the dark flowing Simois. A strange wild fury seized upon Alured all at once ; a fierce desire to be up and doing ; a passion which brought fire into his eyes, and set his teeth close together, till he was in the thick of the fray. Pressing onward at racing speed, he dismounted, flung his bridle to an orderly, and put himself at the head of the shattered column. With a ringing shout the men took up his short sharp whimper, and charged forward one and all like bloodhounds in full cry. This was the turning point in the day. The attack was completely successful, the slaughter enormous, the prestige gained of incalculable importance, for this was the first occasion on which the Maoris had been surrounded in their entrenchments and slain or captured almost to a man.

But the horse which Sir Octavius had lent Alured was killed by a stray shot just at the end of the action.

This fight at Keri Keroa ended Bowles' independent operations. Immediately afterwards he rejoined the head-quarters of the army.

The day after his return Alured wrote a humble letter to the general's aide-de-camp,

explaining the mishap about the horse, and enclosing a blank cheque which he hoped "Sir Octavius would fill up, as he thought fit." Our hero was still in funds, the purchase of his promotion having been something less than the mysterious £2000 of which we have already heard.

In reply, Sir Octavius sent to say he wished to see Captain Frere; and to the office of the commander of the forces Alured forthwith repaired.

"Horse shot in action, hey? Deuced unfortunate. Good nag too. How did he carry you?"

"Capitally, sir. I am very sorry I assure you."

"Yes, yes, you shall pay for him—the regulation price when you get it. Don't bother your head further."

Alured expressed his thanks, bowed, and was about to retire.

"Stay one moment. So you did your work like a man I hear? Good, sir, good. Bowles has mentioned you in his despatch. I've just got it."

“Has he, sir, really?” Alured flushed crimson with delight.

“They’ll give you a brevet probably.” A step towards Millicent,—who had rejected his love! “What I wanted to say to you was this. Mauleverer—you know him?—my quarter-master-general is knocked up, and goes back to Auckland to recruit. I feel half-inclined to give you the job of filling his place. Are you fit for it?”

“That is hardly for me to say, sir. It’s very good of you; but there must be many others more——”

“What have you been? Adjutant?”

“For five years.”

“Can you draw? field sketches, plans, and all that. Yes? All right then. I’ll have you put in orders to-night.” Another step, and a longer one, towards success.

From day to day Alured became more and more useful to his chief, developing qualities that had hitherto lain dormant, or existed only in the germ. Great capacities for work were among the chief of these; nothing seemed to weary him; no difficulties daunted, no dangers

deterred him. In this way his friendship with Sir Octavius ripened, and their intercourse grew to be intimate and close. The general often spoke to him in confidential terms upon the conduct of the war, and discussed with Alured, at length, the chances of the future.

"It seems to me, sir," said Alured once, "that to obtain complete success you must break up the Maori power, once and for all."

"A self-evident proposition. Is not that what I am trying my utmost to accomplish?"

"Yes; but instead of proceeding, as we do, by one line of operations, in one part of the country only, suppose we had several small columns acting from different points along the coast? As these, worked with enterprise, gained ground inland, the enemy must split up his forces to meet each attack. Every defeat would scatter him more and more."

"It is wrong in principle. I have always objected to fritter away my force in dribblets. I am weakened enough already by the detachments I have to lend to protect each settlement along the coast. Your plan would weaken me still more."

“But if the enemy were weakened most, sir?”

“You press me hard. But you don’t know, nor can I tell you, how I am hampered by political reasons.”

Another time the conversation took a similar turn.

“You were talking, Frere, about breaking up the enemy’s forces into fragments. Has it ever occurred to you that we might set one half of the Maoris to fight against the other?”

“To fight each other like Kilkenny cats?”

“Yes; the more killed the fewer Maoris left. But don’t repeat that speech! As you know, some tribes have taken no part in this war, to spite their brethren who did, whom they hate worse than us, the Pakehas.”

“Why not send an embassy to some of the more powerful ‘friendlies,’ and ask them to join us?”

“Will you go?”

“Of course, sir; at once if you wish.”

When, some days later, the news came in of the assassination under the foulest auspices of Captain Jevons; by the Ngatiamanis, a tribe

which had been long in arms against us, Sir Octavius spoke to Alured again.

“If you are still ready to volunteer for the post of ambassador you shall have your wish. I want to punish these Ngatiamanis promptly ; but I can't get at them. It would take a month for the troops to penetrate to their country, which lies behind the mountains south of the river. But these scoundrels happen to have a deadly feud with the Te Angarawas, who are friendly to us. At least they have eaten enough of our meal and potatoes to be the fastest friends. Now this is my idea : you shall go, with an interpreter, to the Te Angarawas. Explain to them my desire to be on the best terms with them. Tell them of the recent massacre—of the queen's rage ; work on their feelings of hatred, and promise them revenge against their old enemies.”

“And then, sir ?”

“After taking part in a few inspiriting dances—not more difficult than the lancers, I dare say—put yourself at their head, and march against the enemy. Bring him to an action. Beat him,—punish him. I'll trust to you to give

a good account of him. Come back victorious, and you shall have the 'cross.'"

"I can only do my best, sir."

Frere's preparations were soon made. Armed with the necessary letter, and accompanied by a half-caste named Mulloa (a descendant of the Irish Mulloys), he proceeded *via* Auckland in a steamer to the eastern shore, close to which the Te Angarawas had their home.

A mission to a Maori tribe may miss the magnificence which surrounds the diplomatic intercourse of mighty powers. Frere was neither prince nor duke, nor was he an *élève* of Foreign Office education. The state to whom he was accredited numbered a few hundreds only. Their palaces were reed-built hovels; their costume was blankets; their decorations, an artistic tattoo. But at least in the outward forms of diplomacy they were not behind-hand. In receiving Alured they observed the most scrupulous etiquette. He was kept at a distance till the mellifluous horn had summoned to a long talk the leaders and warriors of the various *hapus* or septs of the tribe. The Maori is a born debater; earnest, fluent, pos-

sessing often oratorical power. Excited gestures and rapid actions accompany his words. He takes the stage, walking to and fro, a distance of twenty or thirty feet, as if torn inwardly with storms of thought, while his audience hang breathless on his accents. Alured was admitted at length to the debate, his letter of service opened and read aloud. Then, through the interpreter, he addressed them, and his speech was received with much applause. Finally the Te Angarawas divided ; everybody going into the lobby, so to speak, with the ministry, except half-a-dozen, the inveterate talkers of the tribe, who preserved strict independence of action, meaning to speak again either way as it suited them best.

At the breaking up of the *korero* (talk), Alured became the object of friendly rivalry among the chiefs, each claiming the honour of entertaining him. It was not till day dawned that he discovered that the "friendlies" had resolved to take up his cause in earnest. The fighting men had mustered already, and were busy cleaning their arms or fitting new handles to their tomahawks. Many had stripped to

their shirts, a business-like declaration of a wish to fight not unknown in more civilized lands.

The enemy's village lay at a distance of three days' march. As the negotiations with the Te Angarawas had been conducted with strict secrecy, Frere hoped to take the Ngatiamanis by surprise. On the first and second days, safe among the tortuous forest tracks, or in the valleys of the streamlets, they marched without fear of observation. But on the third morning a council of war was held. They were now on the enemy's ground, and might meet at any moment parties on the march, outposts, or men searching for supplies,—potatoes, maize, and the roots of the *nikau* fern. Alured was content to halt during the day, if the chiefs would agree to make a night march. The duty that lay before him was so unpleasant that he was naturally anxious to bring it to an end without delay. Yet the suggestion to proceed by night nearly broke up the expedition. The superstitious Maoris fear the darkness more than naughty children. The Te Angarawas distinctly refused to follow Alured's advice. He stormed, promised, argued. This last device

was the most successful. The advantages of a night march were manifest. The enemy would not dream of attack. Knowing that no *Pakehas* (strangers, English) were near at hand, they would deem themselves safe. Their watchmen would be half asleep; and the tribe would fall an easy prey.

These arguments at length prevailed. Throughout the rest of the day Frere's little army halted in a clump of brushwood near a stream, in whose limpid waters the natives revelled like amphibious beasts. It was a dull, still day, and the pools lay like glass beneath the shadows of the trees; but towards evening a red, angry glare blazed up behind the straight tree stems, laced together with creepers and rank undergrowth of parasitic plants. The sun was there, setting in a sulk, and the wind rose shrieking, as if in triumph that it had the world all to itself—shrieking with increasing rage as the night drew on, till before the march was done it was blowing a gale. Then woke the artillery of the heavens, firing first minute guns, then rapid salvoes, amid blazes of bright light and blinding rain.

In the midst of a storm, such as New Zealand only knows, the Te Angarawas fell upon the Ngatiamanis and slew them. Their pah was almost undefended. The watchmen, shrinking back behind the shelter of the inner palisades, were asleep, and could not give the alarm. Next day the *whares* were burnt to the ground, and Alured returned victorious to the coast.

A success of this kind brought our hero at once into communication with the chief personage in the colony. This was the initiation of a new policy, and to Alured was due the honour and glory of it. Halting for a day at the capital on his way back to the front, he found himself for the time being a hero. Special invitations were showered upon him by all the bigwigs in the place; and while enjoying these festivities, the governor gave him the option of undertaking a second mission of a similar or even more hazardous character.

In this campaign, where Alured Frere is figuring so much to his own advantage, and, we trust, to the delectation of the reader, the most noted personage among our enemies was a certain Wiremu Wiremani, chief of the Ara-

wahi tribe, an able leader, fierce in fight, uncompromising in his demands upon the *Pakehas*, who had usurped his native soil. He was said to have originated the war; it was true that he fanned the flame till the worst passions of the Maoris were aroused, and upon him, therefore, in a measure rested the blame of the many atrocities to which it gave rise.

Yet about the time that Frere returned from his independent campaign, Wiremani had half expressed a wish to treat with the governor of the colony. But how? He would not enter our lines. We must send ambassadors to him, though it was extremely doubtful how they would be received.

It is needless to point out the risks of such an undertaking: the penetration of a white man unarmed into the very heart of a hostile district, where the privileges of a flag of truce were neither known nor respected. The mission might lead to certain death, but it might also lead to success; and Alured, with another officer, volunteered to go to Wiremani. A native guide and the half caste, Mulloa, alone accompanied them.

The journey inland was long and tedious, skirting our own outposts, but advancing far into the dangerous part of the island. On reaching the first native village, the small party halted, and sent on the native guide as a *parlementaire*. He was to inform the headman that there were friendly Pakehas coming without arms, bearing a letter from the Great Queen to Wiremani, chief of the Arewahis.

The reply came in due course. Immediate arrest. There was no help for it. Until the lofty Wiremani gave permission for them to proceed, they must be detained. The Pakehas were prisoners. It would be well if Alured and his companions escaped worse. Captives had been killed and eaten before this; and from the disturbance that arose in the *kainga* (village), within an hour or two of their arrival, it was evident that a fierce debate was in progress relative to the disposal of the strangers. Some, as they were told, were for instant execution; others, fearing Wiremani's wrath, begged a respite. Night came on, and nothing had been decided; the prisoners were in the hands of the more merciful party, and every precau-

tion was taken to secure them from violence. They were consigned for the night to a large *whare*, under a guard of fifty savages, who occupied the same hut. Alured, as he bent his head to enter by the narrow aperture that answered for a doorway, thought of his visit to the "friendlies," and wished himself back at Scaggleton. This second experience of a native *whare* was very terrible. Escape was impossible. Even if the guard within could be gained over, how was he to avoid the howling Charybdis outside, where the "opposition" made the night hideous with their yells? By-and-by the confusion without calmed down; within the heat, the darkness, made the *whare* worse than a prison under *i piombi* or an *oubliette* in the Bastille. It seemed as if sleep would never come; yet Alured dozed off at length, to be awakened about midnight by a second and more fiendish disturbance outside. A large reinforcement had come to "the opposition" from the neighbouring villages, and the merciful party was now far outnumbered. Then a messenger rushed in to say the new comers were searching high and low for the prisoners.

Minutes passed of intolerable anguish, while awaiting, as it were, instant death. But in the interval the headman had harangued the malcontents, and pointing out the danger of incurring Wiremani's wrath, implored them to await his instructions. A sulky acquiescence in these views followed; but for the rest of the night, and during the next forenoon, the white men remained in imminent danger. At last, late on the second day, the great chief Wiremani arrived. The prisoners were at once marched before him.

With eager eyes, Alured and his companions examined the man who held their fate in his hands. Wiremani was a superior savage; countenance intelligent, and but slightly tattooed; in manner quiet, speaking slowly, as if weighing carefully each word before it was uttered.

He would not decide at once upon the captives' fate. No; there must be a *korero*. And then the horn sounded, and a grand conference took place in the presence of Alured and his companions, who, through their interpreter, were able to watch the proceedings. Argument rose

and fell with even pulsation. Violent abuse of the British Government; demand for the immediate execution of the prisoners; a few disposed still to be merciful, proposed to keep them as hostages.

Wiremani remained silent. The power of life and death he held in his hands, but as yet he would make no sign.

Suddenly he broke up the assembly, adjourning the debate to next day. Another night of excruciating suspense; another dawn of hopeless uncertainty. Again the chieftains talked and argued; but it was late in the day before Wiremani's voice was heard.

He spoke at length for mercy, interlarding his oration with many references to the Scriptures, in which, from his early education at a mission school, he was well versed. He inveighed in bitter language against the treatment experienced at the hands of the British Government. He abused the governor in round terms in breaking faith with them. No? (Observing a gesture of negation from Alured.) Could the Pakehas disprove these statements? Let them speak.

Then for the first time, Alured's half-caste interpreter, as counsel for the defence, addressed the court. One by one he met Wiremani's arguments, and refuted the charges brought against the governor. His long and able speech ended by claiming protection as bearers of a flag of truce.

Their lives were spared. Nay, more ; Wiremani consented to answer the governor's letter. The complete success of the mission was ensured, when a month later this noted chief took the oath of allegiance, and laid down his arms.

By this time Alured Frere had deserved well of his country.

CHAPTER XI.

AT BEACHBOURNE.

“Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, oh sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.”

TENNYSON.

MEANWHILE, how did it fare with our other characters at home?

Lady Moynehan had remained abroad a year or two after Millicent's accident; at first because the latter was slow to regain strength, then because they both enjoyed travelling. Neither had done Italy before; Spain was a new country to them. A winter in the East followed, and a voyage up the Nile. By the time they revisited Moynehan Castle, the roses bloomed again on Millicent's cheeks, and her health was evidently restored; but of her inward health, the soundness of heart and mind, Lady Moynehan knew nothing. Millicent was reserved, almost to absolute silence, on the past. Once only

after writing Alured's letter of dismissal—that letter which we have already seen—had she mentioned his name. It was in reply to one of her aunt's injudicious hints that she hoped that everything was really at an end in that ill-advised affair.

“Now, aunt,” Millicent had said, “to oblige you I wrote that letter. It was your wish that I should, and I did; but it is my wish now to have done with the subject. What passed between Alured and me belongs to us only; I cannot speak of it, even to you.”

A speech which convinced Lady Moynehan that Millicent still loved Alured Frere. But at least he was far away; and time or a good marriage soon for Millicent might avert all mischief. This marriage was Lady Moynehan's most earnest wish. She longed to see her niece in the hands of some one who, from his rank or assured position, might be a certain protector. With this in view, she had re-entered society as soon as they returned to England, filling Moynehan with a succession of guests, and opening the house in Carlton Gardens with some of its old splendour.

But though *parti* after *parti* advanced to the attack, each and all retired discomfited. Millicent would not look at Lord Hooghly, who owned half a county; Mr. Theodore Vane had never a chance, though he was heir to a dukedom. When inclined to be gracious, for choice she patronized the "detrimentals" in a way that must have brought joy to the heart of long-suffering tradesmen. Little hard-up clerks in public offices and fast cornets of horse treasured up her words in turn, each thinking that at last a dawn of hope was rising on their sea of troubles. For with her £40,000 Millicent was a catch of course. If these favoured youths had known why she preferred them to more solvent admirers, they would have been perhaps less sanguine. It was only because they reminded her a little of Alured Frere. They were young, struggling, and, everybody told her, decidedly ineligible. Hence in the contradictory constancy of her impulsive young heart, she liked them, and if she wanted partners or protection from more serious attack, she flew to one of these. But she never could marry in such a way. This, Lady Moynehan told her

repeatedly. Why was her aunt so eager on this point? Where was the necessity for marriage? To Millicent, this anxiety was quite unintelligible. It might have been to us also, had we not known something of the secret trouble that seemed to exercise such a paramount influence over Lady Moynehan's actions.

One of the new phases of temper developed in Millicent in these later days, was a certain restlessness of spirit, which prompted her to pant for a change of scene. She grew fretful and discontented if they remained too long in one place. A little of the London season satisfied her always. If Lady Moynehan pressed her to stay there over June, she threatened to refuse all invitations, and take to her bed. Moynehan Castle, after a week or two, palled upon her, and became unutterably slow. The very sight of King's Lilies was hateful; it reminded her too much of old times. It was strange that Lady Moynehan should submit to such vagaries, but the more captious and exacting Millicent became, the more anxious was her aunt to anticipate her every wish. Perhaps of all the places they visited in

these days, Beachbourne was the one that pleased Millicent best.

Emulating almost in its rapid growth the railroad progress of the great cities of the West, Beachbourne is a watering-place of the highest character, though it dates but from yesterday. Its weekly journals publish lists of names, mostly of the bluest blood. There is an immense competition for the six-storied mansions on the grand parade, "replete with every convenience, and suitable for a nobleman's family." The Grand Hotel lets its rooms months in advance, and will not admit a suspicion of its items. And yet a year or two ago, those few straggling red-brick buildings, grouped carelessly on the beach, was all that Beachbourne could boast of architectural splendour. Its chief beauty was the soft carpeted down, sweeping in gentle undulations to the coast, ending abruptly in crumbling chalk-cliffs, and fringed along their edges with a spotted border of martello towers. Now terrace, square, and villa stand, where a short time back the corn ripened and the cattle grazed. Upon the broad beach below, the new pier

and promenade, bathing machines and pleasure boats, have driven the sea anemones from their home. The trees that once stood in the hedge-row, now margin the very streets. Their leafy boughs shimmer across the shop fronts, and scatter drops of pearl upon the early bathers, as they struggle half asleep to the sea. Here and there in a sheltered nook, forgotten by the builders, nestles an ancient homestead, that was once lord of all the neighbouring fields, with rich red roof, and walls flint-incrusted, as if a regiment of children had fired vollies of stone into it when the plaster was still wet. In an open space, just beyond the town, one of Street's most splendid specimens provides church-goers with a service as "high" as its steeple. And at the railway station, there is "Smith" of course, with a never ending supply of fiction for those who love to linger idly by the waves, not reading much or thinking, yet not asleep, breathing only the salt sea air, and feeling an endless craving for lunch.

The house in Comberemere Gardens which Lady Moynehan took from year to year, stood close above the parade. A strip of lawn

secured it privacy, but from the open windows you could hear the voices below. It was pleasant to sit and listen to the hum and bustle, without joining in the crowd. Millicent spent hours thus, with a book on her lap, not a line of which she read; for half the time she was gazing away dreamily beyond the pages into space—a long searching gaze, that wished at times to fathom the clouds or look behind the sky itself. Gazing thus, long and earnestly, she might have been a statue of maiden meditation, till the life that was instinct in her became evident from the film passing like a cloud across her tender eyes, filling them with a soft regretful sorrow, in unison perhaps with sad thoughts within,—thoughts which chased each other through her mind, as the fast flitting purple shadows darkened the pale green surface of the Channel sea. Millicent was happy to be left here at the window alone. As a rule, she had the place to herself; and it was with a disdainful toss of the head that she saw a visitor approach just before lunch-time. She drew back, but not before Pierpoint had seen her.

“Let her ladyship know,” said Millicent to

the servant, who showed him into the drawing-room. "Where have you dropped from, Herbert?"

"I was at Beachport, and I thought I'd run over to see you. I'm in a yacht."

"In a yacht?" repeated Millicent. "Not your own, of course."

"Not my own, as you so kindly remark. My friends are so considerate, I don't require one of my own."

"I wonder your friends don't get tired of it. They're much too good for you."

"Not all of them."

"Meaning me, perhaps? Have I the honour to be included among Captain Pierpoint's friends?"

"No, by George, Millicent, you're no friend to me. You never throw me a civil word."

Miss St. Helier did not deign to excuse herself, except by a negative shrug of the shoulders. It was true, that for some time past, she had treated Pierpoint with a coolness that was nearly rude. Connecting him in a measure with Alured's exile, and Aunt Moynehan's determined opposition to their match, Millicent

could hardly bear the sight of Pierpoint. He struggled to overcome her feeling of dislike towards him, but to no purpose. Having been fond of her always, her indifference piqued him to persevere.

"Are there many people here?" he asked, just to say something.

"Crowds."

"Do you know many?"

"Many more than I want to."

"That's complimentary to them."

"Do you know and like any of them so much that you want to take their parts? Tell me who they are, and I'll abuse them severally and in a body."

"Who are your friends?" asked Lady Moynehan coming.

"They're mine. At least Millicent wants to call them my friends, so that she may abuse them for being so."

"Can't you two keep the peace?" Lady Moynehan was perplexed by this strong dislike to Pierpoint which Millicent took no pains to conceal. "But when and how did you get here, Herbert? Will you stay?"

"Thanks ; I must go back by the next train. I only came to tell you some news—about myself."

"Are we to congratulate you, really?"

"I think you may ; it's as good as settled."

"But who is the victim, Herbert?" put in Millicent.

"I am, I expect," said Pierpoint, with a self-satisfied laugh.

"Why, can't you guess, Millicent? Mrs. Fazakerly of course."

"You don't say so!" cried Miss St. Helier, in genuine surprise, adding with a little curtsy, and in a tone quite enigmatical, "I wish you joy, Cousin Herbert."

"Sophia is at Beachport in the yacht. It belongs to the Swettenhams, you know, who are her cousins. That's why I must go back. But may I bring her over to see you?"

"Yes ; please do," said Lady Moynehan.

"I shall be charmed to renew my acquaintance. Mrs. Fazakerly is such a superior person," said Millicent.

Another parable ; and yet she was glad to hear of the match. It struck Pierpoint off her

list at once, and saved her from the necessity of saying disagreeable things to him for the future.

When Colonel Gaynor came in later, he too was delighted. They made no secret of it to him, for by this time he was looked upon quite as one of the family. Gaynor had never relinquished his hold of the acquaintance formed through Alured Frere. He made himself necessary to Lady Moynehan in a dozen ways, and was now free of the house; was inevitable for the battue shooting at Moynehan Castle, and sure of a seat pretty often at the dinners in Carlton Gardens. Whether ambitious thoughts had crossed his mind ere this, it would be difficult to say. But he could not doubt but that Lady Moynehan liked him; she was grateful and *reconnaissante*; thanking him for help and advice, with word and manner which, old goose that he was, he interpreted his own way. Gaynor had never meant to marry, because he feared that he could never get his own price. But Lady Moynehan was something near it. Forty, or little more, a handsome jointure, a title from which some splendour would be reflected on himself—really

he might do much worse. "Lady Moynehan and Colonel Gaynor" would sound very well and Carlton Gardens was not a bad place to hang your hat in. So he followed her about; at a respectable distance sometimes, at others turning up in the nick of time to do commissions or enliven the ladies with a volume of gossip.

"Where do you mean to live, Pierpoint?" Gaynor asked at the lunch-table.

"In town. There's the house in Park Lane."

"No doubt if you've got to live in one place always, there's nothing like London."

"Yes; it's always pleasant. But, Aunt Moynehan, you didn't stay long this season."

"Millicent hated it so at the very beginning, that we left at Easter, and never went back."

"It's like hard labour to me, the season," said Millicent.

"You were very keen about it once," remarked Pierpoint.

"Yes, years ago. I'm wiser now. I wish I wasn't. I'd give something for a new

sensation or a new excitement. Everything's so slow now-a-days."

"Try politics," suggested Gaynor.

"Will you get me returned for Moynehan, auntie, when they remove their shameful restrictions on our sex? I'd rather be a soldier though, and fight. I think I like fighting. Don't you think I do, Herbert?"

"There's fine fighting in New Zealand just now," said Gaynor accidentally.

"In New Zealand?" Millicent's heart beat fast. She knew that in those parts was centred all that interested her now in life.

"Fighting, bush-fighting. Poor fun; very dangerous, and no glory."

"You can't say that, Gaynor. Look at young Frere; they've given the beggar a brevet already, and he's not been out above a month or two."

"Frere?" interposed Lady Moynehan, becoming interested in her turn. "Is that the Mr. Frere who used to be in your regiment, Colonel Gaynor?"

"Major Frere, if you please: he's just got his step."

“What luck some people have to be sure!” Pierpoint went on. “His father was forty years getting to the same rank, and he was a better man all round.”

“I never could see much in that lad,” said Gaynor. But fearing to tread on dangerous ground, he added to Lady Moynehan, “He was a *protégé* of yours, I think?”

“I spoilt him, I’m afraid.”

“To me he was insufferable,” was Pierpoint’s verdict unasked. “In the first place he annoyed me by his excessive good looks; and then he was really very empty-headed.”

“I found him a troublesome youngster, neglecting his work and all that—mutinous too, I remember once,” added Gaynor.

But at this point Millicent broke in. Though she set an habitual watch upon her tongue, she could not allow an old friend to be thus picked to pieces without a word in his defence. From the flush that fluttered like a storm signal on her cheek, Lady Moynehan expected an outbreak, but hardly what came.

“I wonder how you can dare to abuse him,” Millicent cried. “You can’t hold a candle to

him, any of you. I have known him ever since he was so high, and I know how good he is—how infinitely superior to most of the people we meet with in this bad world. Look how clever he is, too. He can draw—like an artist ; and he can sing and play and ride to hounds ; and some day he will be a most distinguished soldier. I wonder it does not choke you to sit there and say such ill-natured things. But I don't care. You can abuse him as much as you like. It will do him no harm. He is far too good to be injured by what you may say. Only he is my friend. And I thought once he was yours, aunt," she said reproachfully to Lady Moynehan. "And I cannot be quiet when you are so unfair, and so unjust, and so untrue."

To say that Lady Moynehan was surprised at this outspoken language would be short of the mark. She was really angry with Millicent. Yet she could not take her niece to task then and there, because she feared to discuss thus openly a subject long felt to be dangerous, and therefore tabooed between them. All that she could trust herself to say was,—

“Millicent, you are too impulsive, and rather too quick to speak your mind. You might well trust Mr. Frere to make his own defence.”

“How can he defend himself against blows struck behind his back?”

“All that I said I would say again before his face,” Pierpoint declared stoutly.

“I wish he was here, just to try your courage, Cousin Herbert.”

“Herbert is never likely to meet him in my house,” said Lady Moynehan, severely. “But this has gone quite far enough, Millicent; let there be an end to it.”

Upon which Miss St. Helier got up and left the room.

It was indeed evident that she had not yet forgotten Alured Frere. The same thought crossed the minds of the three remaining at table, but they did not continue the conversation. After some commonplace talk, Pierpoint got up, and Gaynor went with him to the station. Then Lady Moynehan followed Millicent up stairs.

“Now, I won’t be lectured, aunt, understand that,” said Miss St. Helier, taking the initiative

at once. "You drove me to it among you, and you must be prepared for the consequences. I can't help speaking out my mind."

"If you had done it more temperately I should not complain. But to lose your temper, —and after promising me that you would not think of that Mr. Frere again."

"Is it my fault, if you will put him into my head?"

"And do you care for him really?"

"Of course I do."

"Shall I send for him?"

"No; certainly not. Even if he would come, which is doubtful after my treatment of him. I must abide by what I wrote to him."

"I wish I hadn't asked you to write that letter."

"Indeed, aunt, so do I."

"And I can't see where it is to end," said Lady Moynehan, almost with a sigh. "You won't look at any one. If a man is really in earnest, you're almost rude to him. A time will come, Millicent, when it will be too late. You won't have the pick of the best as now."

"I'll marry the old colonel then," Millicent

said, with a short laugh, in which Lady Moynehan joined, when the girl added saucily, "that is, if you will spare him, aunt."

Then peace was restored, and they started for their usual constitutional on the promenade, where by-and-by, as usual, Gaynor joined them.

In the height of the season as it was just now, the folks at Beachbourne were as regular as the tides in their periodic flowings to and from the parade. After breakfast the crowd ran up till it was high water about noon, then ebbing for lunch they returned towards evening, and filled every corner and crevice as before. At these times the walks were crammed with people, and in costumes so gorgeous that it might have been a sea beach of precious stones, emerald and amethyst, ruby, turquoise, and lapis lazuli, that had been deposited here by the waters. And there was noise enough under the chain pier for Bedlam broken loose. Aristocratic infants fought like young coalheavers over their sand castles, lost their spades, and became bedraggled from head to foot, till their nurses, goaded beyond en-

duration, reminded them, by more than "one touch of nature," of their kinship with all the world. Brass bands sawed the air with irritating din; a woman twanged on the harp a tune which was worse than cracking strings; down on the beach a tub-thumper seized this most appropriate occasion to preach at an indifferent audience on the uncleanness of their ways; and the crowd came and went, chattering, laughing, enjoying the bright sunshine like butterflies at play. It was hardly possible to move about under the shade of the tamarisks that had sprung up so rapidly by the side of the sea terrace walls. Every one knew every one else at Beachbourne; if not to speak to, at least by sight and name. These tamarisks listened hourly to fashionable chat, sharing with the sad sea waves the criticisms on appearance, conduct, and character, that freely passed around, as the people laughed at this woman's pretensions; marked with eyes jealous or complacent flirtations lawful or contraband; toadying the strong and treading the helpless under foot. But woe to the pushing plebeian, male or female, who settled in Beachbourne! In this

uncongenial element they pined and perished ; unless indeed backed up the effrontery that one man displayed who was sunning himself on the promenade just as the Moynehan party issued forth.

An oldish man, not ill-looking, fairly-dressed, but in an extravagant style. Yet even he seemed uncomfortable, as he lounged full length upon the bench provided by the Beachbourne Local Board, because people stared at him and at the big rose in his button-hole, quite out of keeping with his queerly cut brown coat buttoned in tight at the waist, and his square-toed bulgy boots. He was smoking a short black pipe. There was a haggard worn-out look, too, on his face, below the jauntily-cocked, badly-brushed hat.

The moment Lady Moynehan appeared, he rose, and, with an easy swagger, came towards her, hat in hand.

“ You ! ” she exclaimed. The tone in which she spoke was indescribable. There was contempt in it, surprise, and yet not a little fear. But she recovered herself quickly, and before he could speak, said,—

"I am staying at No. 4, Comberemere Gardens. If you will call any morning, I will see you. That will do, I suppose?"

And she was about to pass on.

"No, my lady, it won't do. I'm just home from San Fr'isco, and I want to know what you've done with—"

"At your peril!" cried Lady Moynehan, with a warning gesture.

"Oh, you can't buy me off, my lady, any longer. I'm well enough to do now."

"But I can order you off, and I can call the police. Colonel Gaynor will you—"

It was not to be supposed that this curious interview had been unobserved. Already a crowd had gathered round; persons the best bred are sometimes inquisitive. More than one ear was alert, anxious to catch a word; for all knew Lady Moynehan, who was one of the grandees at Beachbourne. But Gaynor was equal to the occasion. Before Millicent, who was some distance behind, with the child, could come up, or the stranger expostulate, he was walked off: the colonel had him by the arm, and was quietly talking to him as to an old friend.

"Come, come, my dear sir; this was no time to intrude, you know. You can see her ladyship to-morrow."

"I'll make her pay for this. I will not be humbugged any longer. Where are you taking me to?" asked the stranger, abruptly.

"My lodgings."

"Any lush and cigars?"

"Plenty, if you'll only keep quiet."

"Suppose I said I would not go another yard with you? You can't make me. And who are you?" he added to Gaynor; "a relation?"

"Not quite."

"Want to be, perhaps? I twig. Don't do it. You'll be tired of it precious quick."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Aha, old cock! that's my secret."

CHAPTER XII.

RETURN, CROWNED.

“See the conquering hero comes,
Sound the trumpet, beat the drums.”

Alexander the Great (stage edition).

“Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife !
To all the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.”

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

THE P. and O. steamer that was nearing Southampton at the end of a dull day in the early spring, was laden with its customary freight : passengers, varied in aspect and in tongue, but agreeing in one respect,—in their anxiety to get to land. Among them was the Indian official, sapless, colourless, hardened by constant exposure to a tropical climate, till he seemed like a sun-dried brick or a piece of withered wood. There was the Indian also, with liver enlarged, temper and constitution alike deranged. Then there was a “bigwig”

passenger, one of the generals from Malta. Some Australians; a youngster or two from the Mediterranean garrisons. For ladies, chiefly washed-out specimens: helpless mothers of intolerable offspring,—children who careered about the decks in troops like wild dogs, disclaiming all discipline, despising—true scions of a dominant race—the dark-visaged, cringing ayahs, their nominal nurses and guardians. These precious babes swore in “low bāt” Hindūstāni, consigning their childish companions freely to *jehannum*; and when they became entangled between the bigwig’s legs, called him *bewukkoof*, or *Guddha*, or included the whole of his female ancestors in one sweeping malediction.

But for one and all, England was near at hand. England, inhospitable mother, looming dark and forbidding under their bows, shrouded almost in frowning mists, and moated by a dirty circlet of yellow, chopping waves. Yes; home and happiness were there; and from it came one glimpse of promise—a pencil of intense bright light flashed through a slit in the cold wall-cloud, showing where the sun was

sinking to rest, disappearing with modest, unconscious air, as the souls of good men leave the world, unseen, almost unappreciated, but for that one tender ray that tells of a long career of worth.

All were alike anxious to get to their journey's end. The shivering ayahs, with their fiendish charges, jabbering in outlandish accents; the bronzed, bearded men, swearing at the raw air; the sickly mothers; the pale invalids; the seamen, worked off their legs in "the Bay"; the captain in dread lest a Channel fog should catch him before he makes the Needles; and Alured Frere, with the rest, paces the deck with impatient air, pausing again and again to ask any officer of the ship he may meet,—

"Shall we do it, do you think?"

"Most likely, colonel; unless it comes on thick."

This time he is talking to the mail-master.

"How about trains to get on to town?"

"There is always a special to meet me and my bags."

"Will you give me a seat?"

"By all means. But the custom-house people may detain you."

"Why? I've nothing to declare."

"No; but when we get in late at night, they don't come aboard till the morning; and they won't look at your heavy boxes for hours and hours."

"Bless you, I've no heavy boxes. Two years' campaigning hasn't left me much. I might be a new-born babe."

"Lieutenant-Colonel Alured Frere, V.C., C.B.," was the inscription our hero might have written now upon his boxes; and such high-sounding title might have acted as a talisman to the officers of Her Majesty's Customs. But without any such self-advertisement, he managed to get his one portmanteau through the inspection in time to join the mail-master at the station, and take his seat in the single van that formed the "mail-special." Two hours afterwards he was at his hotel in Jermyn Street.

The haste which our hero displayed in reaching London had a deeper reason than the mere delight in being once more at home. He was glad, of course, to feel that his exile

was indeed at an end. But he had come home on particular service: the conduct of the war had been questioned in high place, and to Alured had, in some measure, been entrusted the defence of his general and the course pursued. Active operations were now over, and he could be spared. He had returned, therefore, in advance of his chief; and his instructions were to wait at once upon the authorities, by whom he would be provided with data from which to prepare an exhaustive report. The House was to meet shortly, and the Government hoped, by a Blue Book, to convince the most heretical of its opponents of the justness of the war, and of the unerring wisdom with which it had been waged and guided.

The morning after his arrival in town they gave him a room at the War Office, a clerk to help him, and piles upon piles of paper. It was a labour of love, but it called for many hours of incessant toil; and, as time pressed, he had to tackle his work without delay—without more than a short glimpse at Scaggleton, for he was too busy to leave town. The major seemed busy and happy too. Bloaters were “up,” and

although poor old Fungus was dead, a new partner, with capital, had been taken into the business, and money was coming in hand over hand.

And now young Colonel Frere began to find himself something of a notable in the London world. At least he became sufficiently eminent to be worthy of mention in those lynx-eyed journals which spy out the movements of the great. First, the military papers took possession of him, and gave him a paragraph in an early edition as follows :—

“Lieutenant-Colonel Frere, V.C., C.B., an officer highly distinguished in the late war, has just returned to England. Colonel Frere is at present employed in preparing an important report upon the late operations, from official sources.”

Other journals followed suit. One gave the incident by which he won his cross. Another referred to his daring march into the enemy's country, the only European amidst herds of savages. In a word, he woke to find himself famous. It was a time, perhaps, when lions were at a premium, and as there had been no

other war for years heroes were scarce. One of the first persons to take him by hand was the Duchess of Greyfriars, who, on the strength of old acquaintance, made him promise to dine at her house. Once launched it was easy enough to swim. The current, flowing in the same direction, bore him quickly along, and for this season at least Frere was quite the fashion.

To our hero, then, young, handsome, and successful, the doors in Mayfair opened at his simple "sesame." He lived in a quiet room in a street near his club, and gave the "Mars and Neptune" as his address. The porter there of a morning spent half-an-hour in sorting out Alured's letters. More than half of them were invitations—tickets of admission which would have been worth their weight in bank-notes to Alured a few years before, when he lingered like the Peri outside the paradise where his beloved had her home. Now, he was past the gate and she was no longer there.

No; though from the first he had held vague fluttering hopes that he might now meet Millicent, and upon more equal ground. He wandered from drawing-room to saloon, missing

the only face he longed to see. What had become of her? He did not dare to ask whether she had married, flattering himself that on this point no news was good news.

In the midst of his doubts, Captain and Mrs. Pierpoint asked him to dinner.

Had Pierpoint married Millicent? Though he must have known on reflection that the handwriting on the card of invitation was not Millicent's, though he might guess that some kind friend would have told him ere this who Millicent's husband was, still Alured ascended the staircase in Park Lane with a cold chill at his heart.

"Colonel Frere!" said Jeames.

"Oh, so glad to see you, Colonel Frere."

The voice was familiar, but it was not Millicent's.

"You remember my wife, do you not?" asked Pierpoint.

"We were at Lady Moynehan's for Goodcot once I think," said the late Mrs. Fazakerly.

"Of course," replied Alured with animation.

"I was not likely to forget that."

"Oh, Colonel Frere, it's so good of you to

say so ; and I knew you would be famous. I told you so then ; you gave me the idea of a man who would become very distinguished."

"Have you seen anything of our friends at King's Lilies," Pierpoint inquired, remembering Millicent's avowal of her liking for Frere.

"No ; I was wondering why I hadn't seen them. Where are they ?"

"They seldom come to town. The young lady professes to hate it. Just now they are in Ireland."

That was all the information he vouchsafed ; and Frere soon found his work cut out for him in replying to Mrs. Pierpoint's cross-examination. She knew all about the war, of course, a great deal more than Frere did ; and told him that the general was quite in the wrong, and that they had misused the Maoris shamefully.

It was not only by the fashionable world that Frere found himself fêted and made much of. Many old professional friends came forward to congratulate him on his success. Brother-officers and others who had known him well, and had prophesied, so they said now, great things of him always. They had been

certain he would do well. None of these greetings were so cheerful, or had such a true ring, as Starkie's hearty welcome.

"Aha! the boy has turned into a man has he? I'm right glad to see you, Colonel Frere, V.C., C.B., Q.E.D., and the rest of the alphabet. Has success turned your head? Are you ashamed to be seen arm-and-arm with a doctor in the Row?"

Alured swore that there was no man he would rather thought well of him than Starkie.

"You've been a good friend to me, Starkie—always."

"Have I indeed? And in what way pray?"

"Why by your advice and your friendship, and the brave words you spoke to me."

"Is that all? They didn't cost me much. But now you're back I hope I shall see something of you. To tell you the truth there is hardly a man I care to speak to here."

The fact was, Starkie, old cynic, with his strong language and sneering ways did not make friends. People were afraid of him, and even in his club he found his life more lonely

than he liked. So he and Alured breakfasted together and dined together whenever Alured was not engaged elsewhere. But Starkie resented the piles of invitations which were showered on his young friend.

It was not jealousy of Alured's luck—it was jealousy of the people who monopolised so much of the young man's time, that made Starkie break out into open abuse, which reminded Alured of the old days at Ballybanagher.

“Don't go ramming your great friends down my throat,” said Starkie, more than once, when in reply to his inquiry about dinner, he found Alured engaged twenty deep. “It don't make your conversation a bit more agreeable to me. Who, the mischief, cares whether you know the Duke of Costermonger, or are hand in glove with Lord Greengrocer? And I tell you, it puts up peoples' backs. You've been lucky, devilish lucky; and that has given you enemies enough as it is. Now if you run after these swells it gives your enemies another handle against you. They call you names, and say you're a toady, and that you won't speak to

any one under a title. Leave all that sort of thing to Gaynor. And if it comes into your head to remember that you dined at Lord Tom Noddy's, or went to lunch at Lady Smith's, or were at the duchess's ball, ask yourself whether it is anything to swagger about because *you* went. Think what a lot of better people didn't go, and that half the people you met weren't as good as I am—I, Starkie—though my name is not historic, and I don't buy my clothes on tick."

Starkie questioned Alured too about his love, laying bare his heart, and opening the old sores with incisive slashing language, that had something professional about it.

"Do you think they are sorry now that they refused you?"

"How can I tell? I have had no chance of asking. They're nowhere within reach. And I don't wish to try again, unless I am certain she has not forgotten me. But that is hardly likely."

"Is that conceit, Colonel Frere? Are you so convinced of the impression you made, that you think it is ineradicable?"

"No ; but after what she did——"

And then Alured told the story of the money, mysteriously lodged to pay for his promotion.

"And you credit this Miss—Miss what's her name with the £2000 ? Well, perhaps she did it."

"Perhaps ? I feel sure she did. Who else would ? It was at the turning-point, too. It's that which made me."

"I'm glad of it," said Starkie gravely. Adding with a laugh, "Gaynor swears it was he who did it. He formed your mind, he says."

"Where is old Gaynor ? I never see him here."

"The regiment's in Ireland ; and he's not often over."

"I think I shall go and see the old regiment."

"Lady Moynehan lives in Ireland, doesn't she ?" asked Starkie. "If the mountain won't come to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain, eh ?"

But our friend Alured was not free to come or go just as he pleased. His work at the

War Office was not half done, and there were other calls upon his time. Military matters were the great question of the hour, for one of those war panics which fall upon us like epidemics, had lately passed over the land, leaving us with a tingling sensation of danger escaped. Every now and then the cry of alarm rings thus like a clarion through the land. We have no coast defences ; no army ; our ships rot uncommissioned in our docks ; the enemy is actually arming to invade us : so the country perforce wakes up and takes measures. A few martello towers are ranged like sentries round our shores ; our peaceful citizens arm themselves to the tune of defence not defiance ; our inventors turn out newer and more murderous weapons of war ; some day we shall build balloons to send to the moon on recruiting service to pick up foreign levies. And one of these periodic revivals was in full swing about the time that our hero came back to England. Everybody who knew, and a great many who did not, had something to say on the subject. Papers, pamphlets, and long treatises, on the art of war, on organiza-

tion, on drill, weapons, and accoutrements, lay upon every library table. Frere had spent the best years of his life in mastering his profession, and he too spoke—in a series of articles, terse, original, and able. His name became known in literary circles as an authority on military matters, with a ready pen, and information to back it.

Then a continental war, sudden and unexpected, convulsed all Europe. Frere, eager to be once more amidst the clash of weapons, found no opening for him except as a newspaper correspondent. We were neutral as usual; but the public craved for news, and among all that came from the seat of war, there were no letters more luminous and graphic than Alured's in the columns of the *Centurion*. It was all over, almost as soon as it had begun; but Frere came back more popular and widely known than ever. His good friends of the press stood by him, and his claims and merits were steadfastly paraded. Already was he spoken of as certain of a prominent place on the staff at the Horse Guards.

Several months had thus elapsed, with rapid

whirlwind pace, and Frere felt "full surely his greatness was a-ripening," when a telegram was put into his hands one morning as he entered the War Office.

"Your father is ill. Come home at once."

He took the first train down to Scaggleton, and was barely in time. Major Frere was in great danger. The new partner had bolted, and a crash in the business was imminent. Ruin stared the Freres in the face. It seemed as if Alured alone could stand in the gap. A large sum in ready money was needed on the spot to cover outstanding claims, and stave off bankruptcy. To sell his commissions and apply the money thus, became his duty, and Alured Frere did not hesitate where the peace and happiness of those nearest to him in blood were at stake.

All this had fallen so abruptly upon Alured, that he had little time to deliberate. Immediate action was imperative.

To most of us come such epochs in our lives, when we reach points upon the journey where many cross roads meet. To the right the way is broad and easy, but whither will

it lead? To fields Elysian, home of happy hours; or to a bleak barren wilderness, howling with eternal reproach? On the left the path is steep and narrow; but is there not on high, the toilsome ascent once won, the content of an approving conscience? And Alured must needs stand or fall by his own judgment. Sign-post to guide him there was none. Choice made, no backward step was possible.

In a dilemma such as this, the counsels of friends might have brought strength and consolation. But even this much was denied him. Outside his own family circle there was no one to whom he could open his heart, and to the dear ones at home he dared not speak. Vacillation would have told of self-sacrifice, and to this both Mrs. Frere and the major would have been opposed. It behoved him, in order to secure their suffrages, to appear upon the surface most anxious to enter this new line of life. He combated the feeble opposition of his father—who was better; ill now rather with mental than bodily distress—by saying that he really wished to leave the army. He had done enough in it already. Enough! while his foot

was as yet only fixed upon the lower rungs, and the ladder's height was still to climb. In this the major agreed, but Mrs. Frere was too keen-eyed to be thus deceived. She pressed him to be honest and outspoken with her now as he had always been ; she implored him not to throw up all his prospects in life from an overstrained sense of his duty to them.

Alured laughingly told her that he was most anxious to go into business like his father ; but he hoped to make a better fist of it.

And next post he sent in his papers to sell out.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MYSTERY OF NOKE SURMAN.

“ Yet have I left a daughter
Who, I am sure, is kind and comfortable.”

King Lear.

AFTER the marriage Pierpoint and his wife had gone abroad, where they remained till the following spring. They were too erratic in their movements to be easily tracked, though Gaynor was most anxious to meet with them. He had much to say to Pierpoint, rising out of the acquaintance formed with the stranger at Beachbourne. And no sooner had the paper announced the return of the newly married couple to their house in town, than Gaynor wrote to ask Pierpoint to see him on important business.

“ Glad you’re back !” Gaynor remarked cordially, as he entered Pierpoint’s cosy private room, looking over the trees of the park.

“ We’ve been back some time. But there

were one's friends to visit, and so on. Have you only just got to town?"

"That's all. My regiment's in Ireland, hunting Fenians, and I can't turn my back for a second without a special recall from the general. But I wanted to see you so much."

"Yes; so you said in your letter," replied Pierpoint, in a cold ungenial voice. It seemed to occur to him that perhaps Gaynor wished to borrow money. With his wife, Pierpoint had grown rich.

"I was at Beachbourne, you know, last year."

"Just before I married. Yes?"

"When Lady Moynehan was, in fact, and, ah—ah—"

For a man so much at home in the ways of the world, Gaynor became rather tongue-tied.

Pierpoint now shifted his line of suspicion. The old fool thought he might marry Lady Moynehan, and wanted him (Pierpoint) to ask the question.

"I remember, Lady Moynehan *was* there at time." Pierpoint's face still wore a look of courteous interrogation.

"I was walking with Lady Moynehan on the

parade one afternoon," Gaynor went on, "when something rather strange occurred. From her manner I rather imagined she—she—"

"Likes you? Is that what's in the wind? Do you want to marry her, eh, Gaynor?"

"No, Heaven forbid!"

Gaynor's sudden vehemence and indignant repudiation of the soft impeachment, took Pierpoint quite aback.

"Well, she was only my uncle's wife—no relation of mine—or anything much to me; but I think you might speak a little more civilly. After all I don't suppose she'd have had you."

"She couldn't if she got the chance. But stop, what was Lady Moynehan's maiden name?"

"Norreys. She was a daughter of old Lord Rivière. There were half a dozen of them,—all handsome women."

"Exactly. Well, some twenty years ago Margaretta Norreys ran away with a groom."

"Gods above!" cried Pierpoint. "You must be mad to say such a thing."

"It's gospel truth. I have it on the most undoubted authority."

“What is it?”

“The man is still alive.”

“I’m sorry for it. I hated her always, I’ll allow. That marriage with old Moynehan was a robbery. But still the little chap is my cousin, and it’ll do him no good to tell tales about his mother,—and about a thing that happened such long ages ago too.”

“But I tell you she not only ran away with this groom, but she actually married him.”

“So much the better.”

“You don’t follow me yet. She married him; and to-day, twenty years afterwards, the man is still alive.”

A light broke in all at once on Pierpoint.

“Still alive! Twenty years—then the marriage with my uncle must have been null and void, and——”

“Little Algy is illegitimate, and you are the real Lord Moynehan.”

Pierpoint sprang from his chair, and began to walk up and down the room with long agitated strides. Once or twice he stopped, as if to speak, but said nothing. Gaynor sat quietly watching him.

At last Pierpoint asked,—

“How did you find this out? You are playing some game; I could swear to that. What is it?”

“Not at all; I came across this quite by accident, and I bring you the secret——”

“For what it is worth I suppose?”

“Just so.”

There was another pause.

“I must thank you very much,” said Pierpoint gravely, “for your disinterested kindness. I shall always be most grateful, but——”

“What are you going to do?” asked Gaynor, seeing the other move towards the bell.

“Order the carriage, so that I may go to my solicitors.”

“Indeed. By all means go or send to your solicitors. Do you think that will help you much?”

“Naturally. I shall put the case in their hands.”

“It's a curious history is it not?”

“Most curious. I can't quite realize it yet. How comes it the thing has never leaked out before? Where is the husband?”

“ He’s been paid to keep out of the way.”

“ But he will be forthcoming now I suppose ?”

“ Of course ; if you choose ?” replied Gaynor, looking keenly at Pierpoint.

“ What are you driving at ?”

“ I should say if I choose.”

“ And you must choose.”

“ Not quite so fast, Captain Pierpoint. I *might* be able to lay my hands on the husband. I don’t say I can. Will you make it worth my while to try ?”

Pierpoint now saw into Gaynor’s hand. He would not part with his secret without he got his price. And yet there was no necessity to pay. If this story was authentic, the matter might be managed without his aid. Yes, but perhaps not so quickly.

“ How much do you ask ?”

“ A thousand pounds.”

A long price, but this was not the time to haggle about terms.

“ Does anybody else know about this ?”

“ Only Frere.”

“ Colonel Frere ! That accounts for his being so thick there of old ; well it’ll sell him—that’s

one comfort. He was here dining only a night or two ago. He is more than unbearable. They've turned his head here in town."

"Is it a bargain?" asked Gaynor, reverting to business.

"Well, yes, I think so."

"I must have it in writing."

"Of course."

Pierpoint was anxious to avoid all *esclandre*, though, as Gaynor pointed out, it was impossible to keep the affair quite secret; the transfer to himself of the title and estates, would of itself be a nine days' wonder in the world.

"Where is Lady Moynehan just now?" asked the colonel.

"At King's Lilies."

"Why not go down there at once and see her? That will be best."

"After seeing the husband? I think so too."

The ladies had just come in from a drive, and were having tea in the morning-room when the footman came in with a card—Pierpoint's. On it was written, "Can I have a few words with you in private?"

What can he want? or what can have happened? were the first thoughts that passed through Lady Moynehan's mind; but without mentioning Pierpoint's arrival to Millicent, said to the servant, "Show him into the library. It's some one on business, my dear; I shall not be long."

Lady Moynehan found her visitor alone and impatient. With hand outstretched she went up to him at once, saying in a kindly compassionate way,—

"Nothing is wrong I trust, my dear Herbert?" Her speech disarmed his anger a little; still he was angry. Had not this woman and her child kept him out of his own for years?

"I hardly know how to tell you what I have to say; but I came on purpose, and I must not hesitate. The kindest thing is to speak out plainly at once."

"Yes, yes, at once," said Lady Moynehan in an anxious voice.

"To speak out plainly," repeated Pierpoint, "and tell you that I have to-day seen a man named Surman."

"Ah!"

"Who is most anxious to renew his acquaintance with you."

"Where is he—this—this—Surman?"

"In London; but if you desire to see him again, he is very ready to come down here," said Pierpoint in a sneering contemptuous tone.

"And he has told you all?"

"I think so."

"The villain—what are his terms now?"

"Terms, Lady Moynehan? How can you dream of talking of terms to me?"

"I do not, to you. I ask what price will buy this Surman off."

"There is something I do not understand in this. You are aware that he claims Miss St. Helier as his daughter?"

"I know it. He has always done so, and he has the right on his side. She *is* his daughter."

"And her mother was——?"

"How can it affect you to know who her mother was? It was this man that made her mother's life wretched, and he was paid to keep away."

"Her mother was Surman's wife?"

"Unhappily; yes."

“ And you knew her ? ”

“ I ? Most certainly.”

“ Most certainly, I should think ; when you know that you and she are one and the same person.”

“ I the wife of that wretch ? ” said Lady Moynehan, drawing herself up proudly to her full height.

“ You cannot put me off with such a theatrical answer,” Pierpoint replied, indignantly. “ And you owe me more straightforward treatment. I have been wronged by you and yours all these years. At this present time, your child keeps from me what is mine, of right, after Lord Moynehan’s death.”

“ One moment, Captain Pierpoint. May I ask, on what authority do you assert that I am this man’s wife ? When did I marry him ? ”

“ Years ago. He says so himself.”

“ Then he is a greater villain than I took him to be.”

“ Will you see him, and hear him speak ? ”

“ On no account. All I want to know is this ; what terms am I to expect ? ”

"From me, none. I must have unconditional surrender."

"Perhaps he will be more generous."

"He may; but how can that affect me? I will have my rights;—as he claims his daughter. He is resolved to take her away from you."

"It's just that I most feared. But it shall never be so while I can fight to prevent it."

"Perhaps you will fight my just claims too?"

"I shall, most assuredly."

"But this is madness, Lady Moynehan. You cannot stave off the inevitable consequence, however obstinately you may refuse to listen to me. I have clearly right on my side."

"Have you?" said her ladyship in such an unconcerned tone, that Pierpoint thought she was certainly one of the best actors he had ever met. "I think you will find yourself mistaken. But I will not condescend to argue the point with you. You choose to come down here and threaten me. I tell you plainly that I leave you to do your worst."

"I shall; you may depend upon it."

Lady Moynehan bowed coldly, as much as to say, she need not repeat what she had said al-

ready, and Pierpoint left the house, bewildered—if anything rather crestfallen. He had come to King's Lilies expecting to find Lady Moynehan a suppliant at his feet the moment he spoke. That she would distinctly defy him he had never for a moment anticipated. What could it mean? There was a hitch perhaps in the story. Was the marriage a fiction? And then he remembered that he accepted what he had been told without hesitation and without asking for proofs.

Pierpoint returned to town rather shaken in his hopes, and far less confident than when he left it.

Meanwhile Lady Moynehan at King's Lilies pondered long and deeply over his visit. It was evident that for all she could do, Surman would be denied no longer. He would come to claim Millicent, and Millicent he must have—if he insisted. The girl was still under age, and her father—in case her mother did not declare herself—was clearly the best entitled to carry her off. And now it was that Lady Moynehan found herself confronted with the trouble she had always dreaded. The father would not

remain in the background. He was clamorous, and Millicent, still unmarried, was without the protector whose rights are paramount even above the ties of blood.

In all this Lady Moynehan seemed more solicitous for Millicent than for herself. To the danger which seemed to threaten her and her son through Pierpoint, she was to all appearance utterly careless and indifferent.

While she waited to hear more of the enemy's movements, wondering how they would attack her next, Pierpoint met Gaynor again, and told him of the result of the interview.

"She's brave and plucky, I must say," was Gaynor's open opinion of Lady Moynehan's conduct.

"Is it mere bravado, though? She must know more about this business than anybody else?"

"Not more than Surman."

"But can you depend upon him? Have you any proof that he is not a thorough-paced scoundrel? How do we know that what he says is true?"

"I tell you I have the very best proof: I

have seen the marriage certificate,—a certificate of marriage between John Surman and Margaretta Norreys.”

“That ought to be conclusive.”

“I should think it was conclusive! But I’ll tell you what my lady’s game is. She still hopes to buy Surman’s silence,—probably through her daughter. The man is silly about Miss Millicent; and her ladyship—as I must call her, I suppose—knows it, and will try and treat, offering, as a sop, to give up the girl.”

“All the more reason why I should press on my case.”

At King’s Lilies, when the post-bag arrived of a morning, Millicent usually opened it, and passed the letters on. They were at breakfast.

“Here, aunt, is one for you, from Goreham-bury; two on business. Three for me: one is such an odd one. I must open that first.”

She read it through in a second or two, then put it down, and turned ghastly pale.

“Aunt! answer me, please, at once:—Is my father alive?”

Lady Moynehan did not speak.

"Please answer me."

"My dearest Millicent, he——"

"Do tell me!"

"Yes; he is alive."

"Then this is true:" and with that she tossed the ill-spelt, badly-written letter, which had just arrived, to Lady Moynehan to read.

It ran as follows:—

"It's your papa, Millicent, your poor father as writes these lines, hoping they will find you well, as it does not leave him at present, thank God for it. These many years have I waited in the hopes of seeing you again as a lady, which you are a lady born; but when I comes and asks, my lady says I mustn't. You're all that's left to love me in this world, and now I am on a bed of sickness from which I may never rise no more. I should desire you to come and close my eyes. It's true you got no father's care from me; but I knew as how you were better cared for with my lady. For the love of God, come and see me."

"I must go to him," Millicent said abruptly, and in a very decided tone.

"You never would, surely." Lady Moyneham was aghast.

"It is my duty."

"And do you owe me no duty? Have I not done all I could to make you happy these years? You will not force me to call you ungrateful, Millicent?"

"But he is my father, aunt."

"And how has he shown his fatherly care? You have grown up in ignorance of his existence?"

"That was not his fault, perhaps."

"Do you accuse me, Millicent? But I tell you, you cannot go and live with this man; nor can I allow you to bring him here."

"In such an alternative, aunt, I have no choice: I must go to my father."

"To stay?"

"Yes; to stay. I ought to throw in my lot with my father."

"Do you know what that means? Do you realize the squalid, hateful life that would be before you?"

"I'm not a pauper."

"You are until you are of age."

“Do you mean to say, aunt, that you will throw me off altogether for doing this? How can you blame me when I am only acting rightly? You know that I am.”

“It is not right to forget me all at once.”

“I shall never cease to love you, aunt; you know that, too. But he is my father. Suppose Algy were away from you, and you asked him to come to you,—perhaps for the last time,—how sore your heart would be if he refused!”

“You seem to lay no store by my words, Millicent; it is useless my trying to influence you. But you are wrong,—I do indeed think so. Perhaps I am speaking more harshly than I ought; but it is so hard to lose you,—you are more like my own daughter,—I cannot bear to let you go.”

“I must go to my father, aunt,” was Millicent’s reply again.

Lady Moynehan’s eyes filled with tears, but she said no more: only by the next post she wrote to Alured Frere and told him all.

CHAPTER XIV.

RELICS.

“ Car en France
Comme en Autriche
Le militaire n'est pas riche
Chacun sait ça.”

A CHANGE had indeed come over Alured Frere and his fortunes in these few short weeks. All his old associations gone by the board, and he, hatchet in hand, standing in the midst of what he himself had cut away. To be chained to dull, stagnant Scaggleton now and for ever was his lot, instead of that bright future which had been so near his grasp, only to be dashed away from his lips by his own act.

But our hero was of stuff too stout to sit down and repine like Alnaschar over the ruins of his basket. Hopes may sink to the lowest ebb, but they are never shattered like glass, beyond repair. Alured was already picking up the pieces when, with all the native energy of his character, he strove to do the work he

found ready to his hand. To pick up the threads of his father's business, and, unraveling the tangled skein, weave anew a strong, substantial success, was ample employment for all his time ; and if he could bring no previous commercial training to help him in his task, yet were there qualities developed by his late life which stood him in good stead now—a rare capacity for work, sound sense, and much practical experience in dealing with men. His mother looked at Alured, and wondered how it was that he ruled them all at the factory so easily. Almost at once, and without an effort, he proved himself master, winning willing service from all his subordinates ; from the lowest labourers, who liked his short, sharp, straightforward orders, to the clerks in the counting-house, who, while they felt he lacked their special knowledge, had the respect for him which men, brought up in sedentary pursuits, render to success by flood and field. In this way, Alured gave new life to the business ; not alone by the ready cash which restored its credit at once, but by the impetus of new blood, sweeping like a new broom, steam-

driven, through every corner of the whole concern. Major Frere, too, was astonished at the success which attended Alured's efforts to put things straight. His confidence in his son rose. In the very matter where he himself failed, Alured showed that he was capable and clever. There was no doubt that ere long everything at Scaggleton would be the same as of old. Prosperity was fast returning.

And yet, in the midst of all this, had Alured no regrets for the life he had put behind him? Did it not chafe him at times to think that other men, his contemporaries, would, perhaps, reap full success, while for him there was to be no harvest of honours in the future? When such thoughts came to him he crushed them out with a proud masterful spirit; resolutely denying to himself that he was sorry for the step he had taken. In the manifold occupations of his life at Scaggleton he found forgetfulness.

But memory may be scotched or silenced,—hardly killed outright. See, for instance, how an appeal to the senses—a whiff of sweet essence, a bar of music, a passage of bright

colour—will wake up our sleeping thoughts into full, perhaps irritating, vigour. The essence recalls the free exhilarating air of heather-scented moorland, the balmy breath of garden walks, the rich perfume of exotics, the fragrance that surrounded some beloved being, in whose presence was our only heaven ; the music is the same that stirred every nerve once with wild pulsation,—the music of hounds in full cry, the ringing cheer that spurred us on to the breach, the maddening strains of an eternally to be remembered waltz, the soft tender notes of the wind sighing after sundown between the tree-stems, or the quiet plish-plash of the wavelet on the beach ; the bright colour is the same as the blue that once shone from her eyes, or the peach-blossom that bloomed upon her cheek. From the chance action of such agents as these we can never escape altogether ; and Frere found himself thus spell-bound by a voice of the past, when he thought himself most safe from the charm.

He had gone into Coxmouth on business, riding the steady-going cob which he was

accustomed to borrow for these journeys, and was returning to Scaggleton well satisfied with his day's work, when he came suddenly upon a regiment of foot, marching. They were to halt a night in Coxmouth, on their road to the north ; and as they came swinging along with measured tread, travel-stained, but workman-like, Alured's heart warmed at the sight. For a moment he was again a soldier, too. He found himself scanning the appearance of the men with critical eye, noting a flaw where he could in the sit of their accoutrements, in their "intervals," and so forth ; but confessing also that there was little at which he could cavil. As they passed him he raised his hat to the colours, and went his way with a sigh—back to the bloater manufactory at Scaggleton.

The moment his back was turned the band struck up a march. The regiment was now near the town, and it is *de rigueur* to enter cantonments with beat of drum. This march ! Alured knew the tune by heart. It had been a favourite "quick step" with the old 145th. Times without number he had marched behind it, and as the air gathering strength rose

clearly, marked and distinct upon brassy bass and squeaking treble, a pang like a knife-cut shot through his heart. It might have been childish to give way to such emotions; but a man cannot wean himself all at once from the associations of a lifetime. Alured was a soldier by instinct; and from his youth upwards he had made camp and quarters his home. Now for the first time he fully realized that the profession which had once been his glory was gone from him for ever. He had separated himself from his old career as completely as machinery tears a limb from the human trunk. To him, in the sudden wrench, all pain had been dulled; but now with a shock as of cold upon the mangled stump, he woke to the magnitude of his wound. And the anguish he endured was the more keen, because he mourned with a regret that was unavailing. As he listened to the well-known notes, he knew that his bright expectations were gone for ever. But had he not dreamed of the day when he might lead a regiment of his own? Of the time when, with wider experience and larger powers, he might find himself of note in

the State, as a soldier ripe in council, eminent in war? All this was utterly past and gone. Ambition was dead within him. No power on earth could quicken and make alive the dust of his dead hopes.

He rode home sick at heart, depressed, dejected, with a sorrow that no effort of will could silence or put aside. All through the night he seemed to hear the melody that had roused him to the reality of his despair borne along in mournful cadences by the wind, howling, "too late! too late!" with endless refrain. Nor could he shake himself free from the painful fascination, even when the sun shone into his room, reminding him with its brightness that happiness and hope were not both dead on earth.

But it was as if he was doomed just now to be confronted with memories of the past. Quite by chance that morning, in sorting some of his papers, he came across a bundle of old letters,—tied together with red tape, and encircled by a springless india-rubber band. The fastenings were soon undone, the parcel opened, the letters turned out one by one. They are

in Millicent's writing, and in Lady Moynehan's ; here and there the ink has faded, the postage stamps have changed colour, the edges of the envelopes are frayed, parts of the letters protrude from the holes they have worked in the corners. These letters contain the whole history of his love. Some date back to Ballybanagher ; one is an invitation to go to the Castle for a week ; another, a curiously-worded note from little Millicent, sent with a present she had worked for her friend, Mr. Frere. Others again bring down the acquaintanceship to King's Lilies ; and there, with unblushing face, lies the letter which Alured calls his death-warrant—the few short words that gave him his dismissal. There is dust upon the desk in which these letters were lying, and dust upon the wrappers that enclosed them—the wrapper dated just before he sailed to New Zealand, and endorsed with a rhyme he had listened to somewhere just then :—

“ Car en France,
Comme en Autriche,
Le militaire n'est pas riche :
Chacun sait ça.”

Was this dust an emblem of the fate that had already overtaken his love,—the love that was buried, as he thought, deep in dust and ashes. And then almost without his knowing they brought him in the letters that had come by that day's post ; and he saw, at first without surprise, among the faded memories of happier days, another letter in one of the same hand-writings bearing the postmark of yesterday.

“What can Lady Moynehan have to say to me ?” thinks Alured, as with hands rather tremulous and eager, he breaks the seal.

It was the letter mentioned in the last chapter. This is what Lady Moynehan had to say to Alured Frere.

“DEAR COLONEL FRERE,—I am in very great trouble about Millicent. For the sake of the friendship you once bore to us, I hope you will forgive what is past, and will come to me without a moment's delay. Every moment is of consequence. Millicent, to my great distress, has left me to go to her father. But he is not the person that Millicent should live with or be associated with. You know him : he is that man from whom you rescued me, years ago, at Moynehan.

“Knowing this, will you help me ? It was to save her from this father that I have watched over her and kept her close to me all these years. She has been kept in

ignorance even that he was alive ; wrongly perhaps ; but she might have made me a better return than leave me all in a moment—and for him.

“ I write to ask your help, because I know that Millicent still cares for you and for your good opinion. A word from you may have weight, while I, who have been as a mother to her, may talk in vain.

“ I think when you have read this you will come to me at once, unless, indeed, you are much changed from the Alured Frere I knew years ago.”

After he had read this letter, our hero was impatient to start for London. But though he took the first train from Scaggleton he could not reach town till late that evening. Writing from his club to tell Lady Moynehan he would call next day, he hunted through the smoking-room, card-room, and library, till at last he found Starkie.

“ Who is this ? Frere ? ” said the old doctor, who was alone reading. “ Come out of this place. I’ve got to talk to you seriously, my lad.”

Almost before they were beyond the limits where “ silence ” reigns supreme, Starkie bel-
lowed out,—

“ What do you mean by it ? What have you

been up to ? You disappear suddenly, without a word, into outer darkness. The next thing I see is your name in the *Gazette*. Explain yourself,—sharp.”

“ I meant to have written to you, Starkie, old chap, first ; but I was so pressed for time—and money.”

“ Money was it ? You ought to have lots. What extravagance pray has brought you to this ? Why didn't you ask some of your old friends to help you ? I'm not in the bankruptcy court yet, and if I was I could still scrape a pound or two together for you.”

Frere took Starkie by the shoulder. “ It was nothing that a pound or two could have squared. If I could have asked you fairly for help, do you think I wouldn't have done so ? My dear old Starkie, I know you are the best friend I have.”

“ None of your palaver,” said the doctor, gruffly. “ I want reasons—explanations—go on.”

Alured, half-laughing, hastened to state why he had thus hurriedly retired from the service ; and Starkie was silenced by his arguments.

"But I have been abusing you, I tell you, though you were right—quite right. The money was given you to buy your promotion——"

"You know that?"

"Of course? Didn't you tell me.?"

Alured had a sort of notion that he never had spoken of it to Starkie; but the other was so positive.

"And it was your own afterwards to do what you liked with. So you have gone into business. Is it prospering?"

"It will; indeed it does already."

"And what has brought you to town? You must stick to the shop if you mean to make it pay."

Alured put Lady Moynehan's letter into his hands.

"Funny; very funny," said Starkie after he had read it. "Her ladyship's sore. But I'm not surprised at Miss Millicent's desertion. One parent is as good as another. But it's not fair to leave a mother who's been kind for a father who hasn't, and who is disreputable into the bargain."

"What on earth are you driving at, Starkie?"

"Simply this : Lady Moynehan is that young lady's mother."

"Good heavens ! I never dreamed of such a thing."

"Didn't you ? Bless your innocent heart ! Why I thought I told you all about it ? I recognised her years ago as the wife—at least I suppose she *was* the wife—of my groom."

"But if she was married to that fellow——"

"Surman was his name."

"If she was married to him, her second marriage during his life-time was null and void, and the present earl, being illegitimate, cannot——"

"Be the earl. Just so. Who is the next?"

"Herbert Pierpoint. But, Starkie, if you knew this you ought to have mentioned it. You are an accomplice."

"*Particeps criminis* ? With all my heart. Why should I bother myself about other people's affairs ?"

"Now everything will go to Pierpoint."

How sorry I am for Lady Moynehan ! I wish I could help her."

" I don't see that you could do much, and I wouldn't recommend you. Go back to Scaggleton. Don't have anything more to say to them."

" Why not ?"

" It's a plant, man. Now the old father is blown upon, and Lady Moynehan loses everything, they'd be glad of anybody for a husband for the girl : that's why they've sent for you. Don't be so green as to fall into the trap."

" I tell you what it is, Starkie : I'd marry her if she'd the worst felon in Europe for her father ; and there's nothing against the man—except that he's poor and out-at-elbows, and was once a groom. Besides, Starkie, I owe Millicent two thousand pounds."

" No, Frere ; that you do not. Miss St. Jersey, St. Malo, or whatever channel her name runs in, did not lodge that money to your credit. I know that for certain."

" Then who did ?"

" I did."

Starkie, as he owned to the gift, looked at

Alured hard, but without a shadow of emotion on his worn-out old face.

“No thanks,” he went on. “I had been winning largely at the table, and it was money well spent. I never meant you to know. I would not have told you now but I want to save you from making a fool of yourself.”

“Oh, Starkie ; I never guessed it was you,” Alured faltered out.

“Let me hear no more about it. The money was of use twice over. I wish I could say as much of my other winnings.”

CHAPTER XV.

ALURED TO THE RESCUE.

“O will ye marry my dochter Janet,
To be heir to all my land?
O will ye marry my dochter Janet,
With the truth of your richt hand?”

The Ballad of Lord Thomas of Winesberrie.

LADY MOYNEHAN received Alured after breakfast next morning in Carlton Gardens. They had not met since Goodcot, years before, but it seemed from the manner of her greeting that she wished that last interview and the time since elapsed to be forgotten. They were to take up their friendship from the happier days at King's Lilies.

“I knew you would come, Colonel Frere,” said her ladyship, thanking him with a bright look of gratitude. “The carriage is at the door.”

She was dressed to go out.

“Are you going to see her, then?”

“This moment. I should like to bring her

back with me,—if you can persuade her, that is to say.”

“ I hope I may be able to help, Lady Moynehan. I confess I have never ceased to love her, and now it seems that I feel more strongly towards her than ever.”

“ You do not surely approve of what she is doing now ? ”

“ It is impossible to do otherwise than to respect her motives in this. She is impulsive I know, quick to fly to extremes ; but her devotion to her father comes, I expect, from a very deep-seated sense of duty. But cannot we come to some arrangement ? For her to come back with you to Carlton Gardens and this—this Surman to——” Alured, thinking of Starkie’s revelation, hardly knew how to speak of the man to Lady Moynehan, who broke in with—

“ I can’t have him in my house ; indeed, I will not. If you only knew all ! ”

Alured waited, thinking perhaps she might tell him all, but as Lady Moynehan continued silent, he said—

“ No, no ; I don’t mean that he should be taken in by you, but we might guarantee that

he should be well looked after. Perhaps Millicent would agree then."

"You don't know how obstinate she is!"

"Don't I?" replied Alured, with a merry laugh. Did he not remember then a dozen of her pretty petulant ways, and love her all the more for them!

They drove together through the crowded streets, far away, to the other end of London, speaking little, each busy with thoughts of the past.

Presently the carriage stopped at the door of the house that Millicent had elected to live in, a dark, dingy lodging in a back street near the Walworth Road. The little sitting-room was furnished with a curious indifference to taste or comfort. Probably Millicent seldom left the sick room, or it might have been improved by a touch or two from her hand. A hard horse-hair sofa with a straight back was drawn up primly against one wall, below a small uncomplimentary mirror in a black circular frame; on a rickety round table, covered by a common cloth of white cotton net, lay the lodging-house keeper's family album, a mine full of ugly-

ness, no doubt, for those who might dare to inspect it. On the mantelpiece was the inevitable dog in delf, flanked by a cherub or two and some faded paper flowers in an ugly jar. Scarcely any light entered the room through the dark coarse moreen curtains. There was no fire on the hearth, and the place looked as damp and gloomy as a tomb.

A slatternly maid had opened the door, and after giving a whisk with a grimy apron over the horse-hair sofa, thereby raising a dust whirlwind which made them all cough, said—

“Please ’m take a cheer. I’ll call miss.”

“Did you ever see such a place?” asked Lady Moynehan with a sigh; “and for a girl brought up like Millicent?”

“It makes her conduct all the more beautiful to me,” replied Alured in lover-like rapture.

“You can’t see anything but good in her!” Lady Moynehan said, half inclined to quarrel with Frere for his infatuated blindness.

Then she came in, like a sunbeam which steals across the carpet, and lightens up all that was gloom before. Frere was invisible in the dark corner of the room, and Millicent went up

to kiss her aunt without noticing that she was not alone.

"He never likes me to leave him," she said in a quiet voice, as if it was the most natural thing in the world to find her here. "I'm sorry I have kept you waiting."

"I have brought an old friend to see you, Millicent," said her aunt.

And turning quickly, Millicent saw Alured Frere.

She knew too in a moment the reasons that had influenced Lady Moynehan in this. It was another and more vigorous attack,—a reinforcement of strength before which her resolves must give way.

But Millicent shook hands with Alured in an undemonstrative fashion, and plunged at once into the subject of her grief.

"My father is very ill, you know, Colonel Frere, so I came to nurse him."

"It was only natural," replied our hero. "You could hardly do else."

"Yes, of course: I am so glad you think so. Aunt Moynehan did not wish me to do it, although——"

Lady Moynehan broke in with,—

“I think, Millicent dear, we had better let that rest. Colonel Frere is on your side, I perceive, and I had rather not discuss the question all over again.”

“Perhaps we had better let it rest. You know my mind was made up from the first, and nothing could prevent me from acting as I thought I ought.”

“One would think I had asked you to commit some terrible crime, Millicent,” said Lady Moynehan, with an air that was too evidently vexed, however much she tried to conceal it.

This interview, from which she had hoped so much, promised to be a failure. She had counted upon Alured's persuasion, though it was too much to expect him to burst forth into argument at once, and in public, so to speak. For the present, he seemed frozen up into himself, and had nothing to say. All he could do was to look at Millicent, feasting his eyes with the sight which for so long he had hungered after, as a landscape painter, lover-like, revels in the beauties of nature when winter is past

and spring comes with its fresh, tender foliage and smiling skies.

Millicent herself was quite self-possessed, but there was a tell-tale gladness in her eye, which was as if a light strove to break like a sunbeam through the cloud of her sorrow.

"Do you mean to stay here always?" asked Lady Moynehan, at last, abruptly.

"For the present certainly; how long, of course I cannot tell."

"Is there any improvement?" inquired Alured.

Millicent sadly shook her head.

"May I come sometimes to ask after you? I might be of use——"

He was thinking how he might best secure an *entrée* into the house, and trusted when once alone with Millicent, to arrange everything. His idea was to take the father, if it was possible to move him, down to Scaggleton. There was plenty of room and to spare in the old Castle, and little doubt of a hearty welcome. His dear mother would relieve Millicent of half her cares, and she in the home that might be hers for ever as soon as she chose, would

be happier even in her present sorrow than alone in this dreary lodging by the Walworth Road.

But although Alured had settled thus already the details of his scheme, he hesitated to broach them too suddenly. Millicent's consent might be hard to gain, or this broken-down invalid father's illness might upset all calculations.

Millicent looked gratefully at her lover.

This speech of his proved that he at least would not abandon her in her trouble. But she was called away just then, and Lady Moynehan went back with Colonel Frere to Carlton Gardens.

"Well," was her ladyship's first remark, "did you ever know anything so obstinate?"

"How can you find fault with her?"

"I must say, Colonel Frere, you have not helped me much." In her chagrin she was disposed to take him to task.

"Not yet, Lady Moynehan. But give me time. I have a plan of my own, if you will but give me time to work it out;" and Alured explained at length what he wished to effect.

"Take him to Scaggleton!" cried Lady Moynehan. "You cannot—must not—do that. Scaggleton, Scaggleton,—how well he must know the name—that villain!"

She paused, and Alured divined that a confession was coming.

"Scaggleton Castle! Do you know, Colonel Frere, that that dear old place was my early home? My happy, happy home, till that man, with his cursed wiles, came to destroy all our peace."

Another pause.

"By his lies, he lured my sister from her home——"

"Your sister!" Alured said, almost with a shout, springing from his chair.

"Certainly: my sister. Darling Millicent, who was my twin sister, who was my double too, and you could hardly tell us apart. She listened to his love, poor fool! and ran off with him. She married him, but it was not till months afterwards we found out that he was an impostor."

"And all this time—since last night, certainly—I have been thinking that—"

“That it was I who was this man’s wife? Oh, Colonel Frere, how could you think so badly of me?”

Lady Moynehan hid her face in her hands, and burst into tears.

“Pardon me, Lady Moynehan—” Alured began, hardly knowing how to excuse himself.

“It was perhaps only natural,” she said. “Appearances were against me. I shrank from giving up my sister’s only child to the father who had deceived her and all of us. To avoid that I schemed and slaved—with how much success you know. The moment this man asks her, Millicent leaves me—without a word.”

“This father is ill, very ill; he may die at any moment, though of course we ought not to count on that. Let Millicent do her duty by him to the last.”

“Down in that vile place?”

“Down there, if he cannot be moved; but at my father’s house, if it is possible to get him there.”

“I know that I ought to conquer my anger against the man, but I cannot, indeed I cannot,

take him in here. It would go against every sentiment of spirit and justice."

"No; I do not ask it, Lady Moynehan. I only ask you to wait."

"I will wait. But," after a pause, "there are other people who will not. See: this letter is from cousin Herbert's lawyers. He believes, as you did, that I am keeping him unjustly from his own."

"But you can give him such a conclusive answer. Why have you delayed?"

"All this worry with Millicent quite unhinged me. I knew that really my child and his interests were safe,—that nothing could harm him. I have put off answering from day to day. Perhaps it was a little to annoy Captain Pierpoint. The longer he dreams of his fortune the worse will be the awakening. But I ought to put him out of his misery now, though he did not behave well to me."

"Shall I go and see him?"

"If you only would! It would save me from a painful scene. Even now I cannot think of my dear sister's grief without becoming

unsettled. I would not willingly lay the whole wound bare again."

"You were very like?"

"In face, height, colour, everything."

"That accounts for the old doctor's mistake."

"That deep-voiced strange man? He had really never known me. It was Millicent, my sister, indeed both, that he attended; for it was when the child was born, that my sister was so ill. She often pointed this doctor out to me afterwards, and I knew that he was in possession of our secret."

"Did Surman remain in Starkie's service?"

"No. As soon as my father found that Millicent had been so ill, he relented, and tried over and over again to lift him out of the mire; and I have tried, but without avail. After Millicent's death he went utterly to the bad. You saw him as a footman at Moynehan."

"And afterwards as a canteen-keeper in the Crimea."

"Then he disappeared, and for so long that I almost hoped that we should hear no more of him. But last spring, at Beachbourne, he

was more offensive than ever. He had prospered, and defied me. But for Colonel Gaynor I don't know what I should have done."

"Dear Lady Moynehan," said Frere, taking her hand, "I hope that now you will have me to share your trouble. To win Millicent I would gladly do more than be kind to her father."

As soon as he left Carlton Gardens our hero hastened to see Captain Pierpoint, and when ushered in he said at once,—

"I come from Lady Moynehan."

"Indeed," replied Pierpoint, distantly.

"She wished me to speak to you in this painful business."

"It's no use, Colonel Frere. I must insist on my rights."

"But there is a grave mistake, Captain Pierpoint——"

"The mistake was in my moderation. I ought not to have held my hand, even for a moment. However, the lawyers must settle it now."

"I tell you, Captain Pierpoint, there was and is a grave mistake. Lady Moynehan

never married Surman,—it was her sister who did.”

“Why,—I have the marriage certificate. See, here is the name,—Margaretta Norreys and John Surman.”

“It must be a forgery.”

Alured could not believe that Lady Moynehan had deceived him.

“That remains to be proved.”

“But I may see the certificate? In whose hands is it? How did you come by it?”

“It is at my solicitor’s. The man Surman himself gave it me.”

“Where was the marriage solemnized?”

“At St. Menehold’s, Finsbury.”

“And the date?”

“About 18—. I can’t remember.”

“You have verified all this? I mean by comparing the parish register.”

“I presume the lawyer has done so. Are you still incredulous?”

“I am; because I believe that no lady is capable of deceiving me so grossly. If this certificate is authentic, Lady Moynehan has told me a deliberate untruth.”

Pierpoint shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say that after keeping him from his own for years, Lady Moynehan might be convicted of worse crimes than falsehood.

But Alured was still loyal to Lady Moynehan, and from Pierpoint's he went to the church.

After a long and diligent search he found the entry of a marriage between John Surman and Millicent,—not Margaretta,—Norreys.

Clearly, then, there had been foul play. The name in the copy which Pierpoint held must have been fraudulently changed. He resolved to go to Walworth Road, and, if possible, insist upon an explanation.

Millicent met him. It was in the same dingy parlour, but to Alured it was like a palace chamber.

"At last, my darling," he cried, clasping her in his arms, and forgetting for the moment the pressing business which had brought him there,—

"Not yet, Alured, not yet."

"I will wait,—wait as long as you like. But listen first to this."

And Alured, as gently as he could, remembering that he was speaking to a daughter of her father's shame, told her the history of that father's life, down to the point where he had sided with Pierpoint against Lady Moynehan.

"Do you see how she has been wronged by this man——"

"Hush, Alured; you are speaking of my father. Say no more, I beg of you. Now in his utter distress I am more bound than ever to stand by him."

"Will you not let me help you? Bring him to my father's house, and we will do our duty by him to the last."

Millicent laid her head upon his shoulder, and said in a low voice—

"How good you are, Alured darling. I will be guided entirely by you."

Frere was passing down Pall Mall on his way to Carlton Gardens, when he heard his name called out.

"Here! Master Frere, I was going to write to you."

Alured looked up. It was his old chief, Sir Octavius Wilberforce.

"I *am* glad to see you, sir. When did you arrive?"

"Landed only last week. They sent for me."

"What can I do for you, sir?"

"Come in and have five minutes' talk."

They entered the "Senior" together, and as soon as they were seated in the waiting room, Sir Octavius said,—

"You have heard the news, I suppose?"

"No, sir. What news? I've been busy and out of the world."

"The secret has been well kept, then. But it'll be in all the papers to-night."

"What, sir,—what?"

"War. At least, an expedition which will end in war."

"It will take every one by surprise."

"No one more than it did me."

"Who is to have the command?"

"Ah! that is the question. I know, and so shall you. Would you like to go?"

Alured's face fell.

"So much, sir ; but——"

"I'll take you. But you must be content with the personal staff."

Alured hung his head, and did not answer. Was it not hard to have to refuse ?

"I cannot accept your kind offer, sir."

"Cannot ? Nonsense. Why not ?"

"I have left the service."

"Was there ever such madness," shrieked the general. "How was it I never saw it, I wonder ? When was it gazetted ?"

"Long ago, sir."

"And what are you doing ?"

"I have gone into business."

"You must be stark, staring mad ; only one thing is wanted to complete it. You are married, I suppose ?"

"No, sir, not yet ; but I am going to be."

"I thought so. Well you'll breed paupers, and be sorry for the rest of your life."

"On the contrary, sir, I'll make my fortune, enter the House, and be Secretary for War before I die !"

Within a day or two they moved Millicent's

sick father down to Scaggleton, where, in the Frere household, he found a haven of rest, and Millicent many friends to share her present troubles.

The Major and Mrs. Frere welcomed her as their daughter, with warm-hearted affection, thankful that their patient self-denying Alured was to find his happiness at last. Mrs. Frere relieved her of much of her sick-room cares, and left her free to explore with Alured every nook and corner of her new home, or to develop a friendship with Dorothy and Lilian, which was to last her all her life.

It was a strange Nemesis that brought Noke Surman down to Scaggleton to die. As he lay there and lingered out his life, he could hear the murmur of the surge upon the beach, and might call to mind how the same ripple lapped the sides of his yacht, when he came in borrowed plumes to woo Millicent Norreys, and lure her from her home. And when the storm winds rose shrieking, the roar of the waves dashing upon the cliffs might have recalled the turmoil of his tempest-tossed life; and so at last, as the tide ebbs, leaving gaunt

and bare the skeleton of a wreck upon the sand, that misspent life of his passed away.

Then when the leaves were green, and the birds held high festival, marrying and giving in marriage among the tree tops, in the flowering brakes, or by the quiet sedges of the pools, Millicent went back to King's Lilies, and there where he had wooed her, and lost her, Alured Frere made her his wife. After a short honeymoon, they settled down in Scaggleton, for Alured was resolved to stick to business. With the income that Millicent's fortune brought him, he was comparatively a rich man; but he meant if possible to make his fortune. And as he grew in prosperity and worldly wisdom, he came to be Lady Moynehan's right hand, dividing with her the cares of a large property which she held in trust for her son. The relations between Scaggleton and Moynehan became very close and affectionate. Lady Moynehan loved to revisit the haunts of her youth, and spent months at Scaggleton Castle, more happily than she had ever hoped to expect. In return she took

Alured's sisters under her wing, and through her they married well.

Major Frere lived to a ripe old age, surrounded by his descendants, and happy in the love of his wife, for the aged couple as they grew older seemed to renew the days of their youthful courtship.

Starkie comes down sometimes to Scaggleton, but as long as he was well, it was difficult to move him from the club. But he has by this time fixed his eyes upon a modest cottage not far from his friend's house, where he may be independent, and yet near little Millicent, Frere's eldest daughter, who is the doctor's great ally.

Grimes is a time-keeper at the factory, very punctual and trustworthy, except in his yarns, which have grown absolutely incredible.

Gaynor still flits about the great world. His plot against Lady Moynehan and her son, and the part he played with Pierpoint, became known through Surman, and he was never after received at Moynehan Castle, nor could Alured bring himself to forgive him. But when our hero took the oaths as member for

Coxmouth, and began to make himself a name in the House, Gaynor would point to him, and talk about ingratitude. "I made him, sir; damme, I made him, and now he won't speak to me."

Whether Alured Frere owed the success that he has gained in life to Colonel Gaynor or to himself, the reader of these pages will be the fairest judge.

THE END.



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